University of Alberta

Translating *Einmal Hans mit scharfer Soße*

by

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Abstract

The following MA thesis centres on the English translation of the contemporary German prose work *Einmal Hans mit scharfer Soße*, written by Hatice Akyün and published in Germany in 2005 (Goldmann). This particular work was chosen as it was seen to be of potential interest to a general readership, as well as in an academic context. The author and original publishers were consulted, and the translation has been completed and formatted with the intention of offering a literary translation for publication by a suitable publishing house. Accordingly, the translation is accompanied by a critical introduction that provides readers with general and accessible background information. Critical engagement with the text during the process of translation has focused on issues of genre, migration, women's writing, intercultural writing, and cultural translation. The text was examined within the context of multiple areas of literary theory – Orientalism, hybridity, cultural theory, feminist theory, and translation theory.

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Introduction

One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce: Life in Two Worlds is the first authorized English translation of *Einmal Hans mit scharfer Soße: Leben in zwei Welten*, a book by Hatice Akyün, published in Germany in 2005 (Goldmann). Akyün is a German-Turkish writer and journalist, born in Akpinar Köyü, a Turkish village, in 1969. Her father traveled to Germany in hope of finding work. He became a miner and brought Akyün, her mother, and her older sister to live with him in Duisburg – an industrial city in the Ruhr Valley – in 1972. Akyün grew up and was educated in Germany, and, at the age of eighteen, moved out of her parents' house and embarked on a journey towards independence. She traveled, studied, and tried a wide variety of different occupations before settling on journalism. Currently, she lives in Berlin and works as a freelance journalist, writing for such publications as *Der Spiegel*, *Tagesspiegel*, and *Emma*.

In 2005, Akyün published her first book – *Einmal Hans mit scharfer Soße: Leben in zwei Welten*, an autobiographical account of her life spanning two cultures. With this book, she describes the day-to-day realities of a Turkish family living in Germany. While she touches on issues of racism and prejudice, she makes a conscious decision to avoid topics such as women being forced into marriage or killed in the name of honor. These things, she argues in a 2005 interview, are not typically Turkish and should not be portrayed as such in the media. Though such incidents do occur, according to Akyün, they are exceptional cases. In her own writing, Akyün makes a concerted effort to encourage cultural tolerance and the

understanding that many immigrants and descendants of immigrants believe Germany to be their home. As she says in *One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce*:

> It's important to me to point out in all my journalistic contributions that prejudices are fundamentally senseless, that every person is an individual, and that we must get to know one another in order to understand each other better. And it's just as important to me to adhere to the fact that there are many people of Turkish descent who want to live in Germany, now and in the future – and not only because it's better for them economically, or because they can earn more money here than in the Anatolian villages their parents left thirty or forty years ago, but rather because they feel at home here, because Germany is their home. (191–92)

In *One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce*, Akyün effectively promotes cultural tolerance by relating the story of her family and her experiences as a female of Turkish heritage growing up and living in Germany through a fictive first-person narrator named Hatice Akyün. The book is structured as the memoir of a second-generation immigrant in which the narrator addresses the reader directly and relates a long, multifaceted, and sometimes intimately detailed personal account.

In order to understand the position from which Akyün is writing, it is necessary to be familiar with the history of Turkish immigration in Germany. With the economic boom of the 1950s, West Germany experienced a labor shortage. In particular, the nation lacked workers for less skill-intensive areas such as mining or sanitation. Many of these positions were filled by workers who migrated from poorer Mediterranean regions – Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Yugoslavia, and above all Turkey. These predominantly male workers

were termed "Gastarbeiter," or "guest" workers, as it was expected that they would work in Germany for a short period of time, earn some money, and then return to their native lands. This, however, was often not the case. Many of the *Gastarbeiter* decided to remain in Germany, and after a few years, instead of returning home, they brought their families to live in Germany as well. As a result of this permanent resettlement, whether initially intended or not, Germany's status as a multicultural nation and a destination for immigration has changed radically over the last sixty years.[1]

In "The Capital of the Fragment," Zafer Şenocak, a novelist, essayist, and poet who also, as a child, immigrated from Turkey with his parents, provides a stark description of this situation. He focuses on Berlin, a city that is now overwhelmingly multicultural. Şenocak writes:

> The German economic machine needed ever more workers. So the same country that only a few years before had regarded even the assimilated German Jews as foreign bodies, and had driven them to their deaths, now opened itself up to migrant workers from distant lands [...]. Nobody thought about how Germans and foreigners were supposed to live together. They did not live together. The foreigners were work horses. Factory by day, hostels by night, seldom venturing into German society, in their own minds firmly rooted in their home countries. But only a few of the so-called guest workers went back home. (Şenocak 141–42)

Of course, the social integration of immigrants and of *Gastarbeiter* and their descendants has been an issue from the beginning. In *One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce*, Akyün

describes her parents as follows, outlining the misconceptions on both sides that have led to the questions surrounding integration in Germany today:

> The Germans were hoping for a peaceful cooperation of different nationalities, skin colors, and religions; they wanted to prove that, in their country, the times of racism and discrimination were gone forever, but the first generation Turkish migrants didn't play along [...]. Both sides noticed too late that their ideas were unrealistic. The one side was afraid of saying out loud that the migrant workers should learn German and become integrated, and the other resisted abandoning their identity and sealed themselves off behind their traditions. (201)

While many *Gastarbeiter* never learned German and isolated themselves from greater German society by associating only with others from their native land or cultural group, the children and grandchildren of these workers – often born, raised, and educated in Germany – embody the entire spectrum of the integration process. Naturally, this leads to conflict within immigrant families and communities. Different generations often have radically different views on the maintenance of culture and language, the importance of religion, and the different roles men and women are expected to play.

Though it does not function as a generational testament, like, for example, *Zonenkinder* by German writer Jana Hensel, but rather privileges individuality and the uniqueness of personal experience, *One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce* instantiates a number of themes and trends in contemporary German literature. It deals with the topics of migration, integration, and Germany as an immigrant country. Therefore, the question of genre is a topic of prime importance. It is clearly an autobiographical text, with the narrator

and her experiences corresponding very closely, if not exactly, to the author and her history. However, there are other considerations if we are to locate this text effectively. One could identify it as either migrant literature, that is, literature written by someone who has immigrated in the first or second generation, or migration literature, literature dealing with the process and experience of immigration. The term migrant literature naturally encompasses writers from a wide range of different nationalities. However, in Germany, it has, as Leslie A. Adelson points out, become largely associated with Turkish writers writing and publishing in German. Adelson argues that "the category of [migrant literature] perpetuates the notion that this body of literature is at best an expendable 'enrichment' to 'native' German literature" (305). It certainly establishes and maintains a division between German writers and "migrant" writers, even though they may have been born in Germany or be German citizens. Thus while it may at least partially apply here, this category may be perceived as discriminatory.

Another possible designation for literature written by second and third generation immigrants could be termed "integration literature." Akyün's book devotes little attention to the actual process of immigration, and when she does describe it, she does so second hand, with reference to her parents' experiences. Clearly, her parents were the ones who immigrated, while she grew up in Germany. What Akyün does focus on, however, is the cultural synthesis she has achieved in creating for herself a life and a cultural niche that include chosen elements of both Turkish and German cultures. The book is subtitled "Life in Two Worlds," which clearly indicates that Akyün is not moving from one to the other, but rather existing in and contending with both. She describes herself as "a prime example of successful integration" (Akyün 1), and relates the details of her journey to arrive at this

point. *One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce* depicts the processes, challenges, advantages, and disadvantages inherent in full integration into another culture.

There are many other Turkish authors living in Germany and writing in German whose works touch on these same topics. Emine Sevgi Özdamar, a writer, actress, and poet, is one of the most prominent Turkish writers in Germany today. She has received, among other accolades, the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize (1991) and the Kleist Prize (2004). Zafer Şenocak is also well known in Germany and abroad, having spent time as a writer in residence in France, Canada, and the United States and having made important contributions to the fields of Germanic and Cultural Studies. Feridun Zaimoglu writes novels and collects the testimonies of Turks from all walks of life living in Germany. Much of his work focuses on the development of identity, the assumption and distribution of roles, and the creation of a language of resistance. Kerim Pamuk also directly addresses the life of Turkish immigrants in Germany and the cultural exchanges, both positive and negative, that take place. It is clear that Akyün fits into a well-established tradition of Turkish, or German-Turkish, writers who write in German and deal primarily with the immigration and integration experiences.

In determining a place for *One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce* in the order of genres, it is important not to allow the book's cultural focus and particular cultural context to overshadow its more universal aspects. Although Akyün puts her emphasis on the successful unification of two cultures, she also describes an array of situations and characters with which almost anyone could identify.

One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce exemplifies a literary trend common in Germany since the mid-eighteenth century, wherein the process of a young adult seeking and/or

establishing his or her identity is described. Martin Swales defines the term "bildungsroman" as referring to a genre of

> novels which concern themselves with the growth and change of a young man through adolescence and which takes this period as precisely the one in which decisively intellectual and philosophical issues are embedded in the psychological process of human self-discovery. (14)

Novels of this type tell the story of a traditionally male and middle class protagonist's adolescence, his education, travels, first experiences with romance and love, and encounters with unusual and influential individuals. It is common for a the hero of a bildungsroman to question or temporarily rebel against his position in society. However, reconciliation is generally achieved and, in the end, the protagonist consents to fulfill the expected role and occupy his social niche.

Although one of the first examples of a female-focused bildungsroman was written by Sophie von LaRoche in 1771, social, moral, and religious conventions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made it almost inconceivable for women to have the sort of experiences and live the sorts of lives detailed in this genre. With regard to female characters, Jeannine Blackwell writes that

> coming of age was seen in purely sexual, physical terms [...] the few female characters who did grow as selves were warped or stunted by a hostile world, and they ended up committing suicide, dying, devoting themselves totally to men, going into seclusion, or going mad. (7)

Thinking and acting independently was dangerous for women, even in the fictional world, where intelligent, spirited, or rebellious female characters were tamed and censured through

endings that reinforced established roles; they "were generally halted before they could complete the journey to selfhood, thus militating against their designation as bildungsroman heroines" (Labovitz 5). At this time it was similarly difficult for women writers to publish their work, especially work that might have been seen as undermining the dominant social order. Thus, until the latter part of the twentieth century, the bildungsroman was a predominantly male genre, both in terms of subject matter and authorship.

However, works describing how a female protagonist manages the "balance and dynamic of community code and feminine ideal on the one hand, and inner drives, vocation, and physical expression of sensuality and love on the other" (Blackwell 89) are becoming increasingly common. *One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce* certainly exemplifies this trend, though it does break with tradition in some notable ways. Akyün's narrator describes her education, travels, and experiences with romance and love. She touches upon her personal rebellion and the conflict it sparked within her family, and she describes the reconciliation process. Though she does manage to find a suitable place for herself within greater German society and within her two specific cultural contexts, aspects of the story are unresolved. Most notably, the outcome of the narrator's search for her "Hans" remains a mystery. In this way Akyün's story differs from the standard pattern of the bildungsroman; it does not offer the reader a definitive ending – a completed process – but instead implies that the story continues and that the protagonist and her situation will continue to change. However, many twentieth century women writers have turned away from the traditional structures of the bildungsroman, in particular the necessity or expectation of completed development, integration, and mastery. Esther Kleinbord Labovitz writes that

> Whereas the male hero of the bildungsroman ordinarily completed his journey and arrived at momentous decisions concerning career and his future while still a young adult, the female heroine was seen to delay her direction in life, while the age limit was extended by each author well beyond early adulthood into middle age. (247)

Thus Akyün's narrative could be associated with a tradition that has grown in prominence since the second wave of the women's movement in Europe; the narrative of female education and personal development evokes certain features of the traditional male-focused bildungsroman, but centers it on a female protagonist and moves away from the established pattern of resolution and completion.

This lack of closure adds a sense of immediate realism to the book, as do Akyün's descriptions of her everyday life, her friends, her job, and her relationships. Her quest to find a German husband certainly provides an engaging frame, or context, for discussing her life in two worlds and attempts to reconcile these, but its role in the book as a story in its own right should not be neglected. The search for a suitable partner, like the search for a suitable career, which Akyün also describes, is something that the vast majority of readers can identify with and will likely enjoy reading about. In this sense, parallels could be drawn between *One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce* and novels like *Generation X* by Canadian author Douglas Coupland or *Generation Golf* by German writer Florian Illies. Akyün addresses many of the day-to-day concerns of young professionals, with a particular emphasis on advice and suggestions for other women regarding everything from cooking to beauty tips to handling oneself with poise and confidence in all manner of situations.

Although Akyün does not attempt to present her story as representative of the experiences of her generation, it is important to note that cultural and generational groups often develop a collective, or cohesive, identity through media such as language, literature, and film. This sort of dynamic, progressive, and defining artistic movement is very prominent among Turks in Germany today. Emine Sevgi Özdamar writes about the current generation of Turks in Germany: "Turkish immigration did not start forty years ago. Immigration started five years ago" (Özdamar qtd. in Diez, 258, my translation). Whether because, until recently, Turks in Germany had lived largely in isolation without the intention of permanently relocating, or because Germany was not open enough to the idea of becoming an immigrant country, it took many years for the migration of Turks to Germany to become a movement that involved not only relocation, but also integration and the desire to build upon and enrich the culture already existing in one's new country of residence.

In his article "Der Halbmond ist aufgegangen" ('The Halfmoon has Risen,' my translation), Georg Diez suggests that these young Turks may be in a position to "rescue" German culture. Turks in Germany today display creativity; they have plans, goals, and talent, while, according to Diez, the German youth is often lacking these characteristics. Turks in Germany, argues Diez, "know the contradictions through their biographies, through their emotions, and through their thoughts; they know life between cultures and are, naturally, practiced in their role as intermediaries" (255, my translation). In a world of ever increasing globalization, the capacity to transmit and translate culture offers significant advantages. Diez argues that Germany should capitalize on this diversity and creative energy in order to establish and use the sort of "energy of globalization and [...] immigrant dynamic" (255, my translation) one would find in England or the USA.

So while Akyün does not claim to speak for others, *One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce* is representative of a number of very important trends in German literature. It is therefore also particularly engaging and useful for any reader who is interested in literary and cultural studies, migrant, migration, or integration literature, women's writing, the practice and products of translation, and translation examined from a standpoint that places the emphasis on the transmission of cultural knowledge. The cultural issues illustrated by this book represent some of the primary questions facing major central European societies and also constitute prominent areas of academic inquiry, one of which is the idea of cultural hybridity.

For decades now, the concept of hybridity has been prominent in literature and cultural studies. In the early nineteenth century, the idea was developed in the context of physiological research to refer to a cross-breeding, or mixture, of organisms of different types. During the following decades, the question of whether different races actually represented different species was hotly disputed. At the time, it was assumed that the decisive factor in this debate was whether people of mixed heritage exhibited the ability to procreate. Racial differences being cemented with scientific proof would have been extremely advantageous for colonizing powers, given that the project of colonialism was justified largely by the continued perception of racial inequality. Hybridity as an idea useful in the field of cultural studies was taken up by cultural theorists only much later.

The term has gone through a number of metamorphoses and continues to be questioned and reformulated. Robert J. C. Young writes, with regard to current applications of the concept of hybridity: "in reinvoking this concept, we are utilizing the vocabulary of the Victorian extreme right as much as the notion of an organic process of the grafting of

diversity into singularity" (10). Although hybridity began as a scientific term, it very quickly became distinctly political.

The concept of hybridity in a cultural context does indeed have its deepest roots in colonialism. However, while it is useful for describing colonial history, it may not be so successfully transposed onto current intercultural contexts. These cases, in which there are often more than two groups involved, none of which could be accurately described as homogenous to begin with, show that power relations and individual experiences are hugely varied. It is becoming clearer that from each instance of intercultural interaction, something new and unique is created – something richer than a simple mixture of cultures and languages. For this reason, various criticisms have been leveled against the term "hybridity." Homi Bhabha expanded his theory of hybridity to explain this particular situation. He created the term "Third Space" in order to provide a place for the "something more" resulting from intercultural exchange. He describes this "Third Space" as follows: "Here the transformational value of change lies in the rearticulation, or translation, of the elements that are *neither the One* (unitary working class) *nor the Other* (the politics of gender) *but something else besides* which contests the terms and territories of both" (154). In this way, Bhabha splinters such artificial binaries as self/other or colonizer/colonized. Applied to current cultural intercourse, these constructions are both reductive and destructive. Horst Turk writes that the possibility is not to be discounted "that the system of images of self and stranger may be dissociated into images of friend and enemy or, the reverse, that images of friend and enemy may be neutralized to give images of self and stranger" (64–65, my translation). The manner in which we perceive the world is largely guided by categories, by naming, by associating and grouping. In order to speak of things, we must be able to refer

to them. However, categories that oversimplify should be avoided, and, when existing denotations are determined to be lacking, they need to be changed. There is an increasing number of people of mixed heritage who identify themselves simultaneously with different cultures and different homelands and who speak multiple native languages. Today identity is manifold; it changes constantly, can never be exactly pinned down, and acts in relation to the identity of others as part of an ever shifting and growing network.

As a consequence, it is difficult to develop suitable terms to describe culture and identity. It is becoming impossible to define people; instead, they must be described. Keeping the social process of "othering" and the so-called struggle for resources in mind, Floya Anthias suggests further alterations to hybridity theory with her concept of "translocational positionality" (633). In this case, "positionality" refers to an individual's social positioning; "location" has to do with context. One can position oneself in different ways with respect to others and to different issues. This theory represents identity as a process instead of a collection of characteristics. Anthias writes that "the focus on location and positionality (and translocational positionality) avoids assumptions about subjective processes on the one hand and culturalist forms of determinism on the other" (633). By taking into consideration what and where a person is at any given time, people can be described in accordance with their current situation instead of in terms of their culture, heritage, language, or country of residence. In *One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce*, Akyün's description of her own circumstances corresponds to Anthias's theory. She writes: "For me the question of identity doesn't have anything to do with a particular place, but rather with a life situation" (166). In describing the way in which her narrator effects a cultural synthesis, she provides an example of the sort of identity Anthias proposes. She has moved

beyond hybridity into a unique cultural realm existing within a network of malleable spaces. This fact can be further illustrated by the subtitle of her book – "Life in Two Worlds." Akyün is not describing hybridity, but rather a unique identity and cultural sensibility that allow her to move from place to place throughout her cultural network.

In much the same way as culture and identity can be regarded as processes, language is a fundamentally dynamic thing as well. *One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce* provides examples of the intertwining of languages, both structurally and in terms of content. Akyün's friends use Turkish proverbs, but they do so in German. For example, the narrator's friend Julia admonishes, "If the sun doesn't shine into a room, the doctor is bound to come in soon" (122), in an attempt to rouse her in the morning when the two vacation together. The narrator makes it clear that she had previously applied this phrase when Julia was suffering from a broken heart and refused to get out of bed. There are many similar instances throughout the book. These proverbs are indeed spoken in German, but their connotations refer back to Turkish contexts, although they are being used in reference to situations occurring within an, at least primarily, German cultural context. In his work "Discourse in the Novel" Mikhail Bakhtin writes:

> Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions. Contextual overtones...are inevitable in the word...the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language...but rather exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions (35).

Thus every utterance is already populated by the purposes of those who have used it before. When words, phrases, proverbs, and so on are translated, they carry with them the context,

objectives, and connotations of the "source" culture into the "target" culture. They contribute to the enrichment of the target culture and to the development of a new, though not separate, culture.

Aspects of this issue are illustrated in Akyün's text. The narrator's younger brother mixes two languages because his vocabulary is lacking when he speaks only Turkish. He replaces the missing Turkish words with German words and the corresponding grammatical structures. Akyün's parents have their own versions of "interlanguage" – a speech system employed by language learners that includes characteristics of both the native language and the target language, is governed by a unique set of rules, and changes over the course of the learning process. Her mother refuses to use the articles indicating gender in German because she finds it senseless to "turn everything into men and women" (9), and she adds extra vowels so that she can better pronounce words. When the narrator speaks to her father, regardless of whether they speak in German or Turkish, they communicate in the "father tongue." This language within language consists of far more than words and has a particular significance for the narrator and her father. He always means something other than, or in addition to, what he says, and this meaning is often expressed without words.

The common German-Turkish sociolect, often termed "Kanak-Sprak" or "Kanak Deutsch" – where "Kanake" is originally a derogative term for people of Turkish nationality – provides a more far-reaching example of a new linguistic synthesis emerging out of the interaction of two "historical languages." While Kanak-Sprak employs German, Turkish, and at times English words, it has a unique rhythm and is characterized by unique expressions and structures – or lack thereof – that speakers can use to express their unique messages. Bakhtin writes that linguistic hybridity "is a mixture of two social languages

within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter [...] between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor" (358). It is important to note that, as with the meeting of two or more cultures, linguistic intercourse also results in a new and completely unique product – a sort of linguistic "Third Space." Like culture, language is also dynamic, constantly changing, exerting influence, and being influenced.

According to Bakhtin, this sort of interweaving of language can occur unconsciously or can be employed intentionally. Thus socially charged language can be used as a tool of protest, resistance, or change. The ability to communicate, to understand, and to be understood carries with it power, as does the ability to confer meaning. Thus when these abilities are appropriated by some or denied to others, power relations are established. In this case, the potential for resistance manifests itself in the ability to exclude others from the exchange of cultural information and experience.

Words alone cannot translate culture. Tamotsu Aoki quotes Edmund Leach in order to show that words cannot simply be transposed into another language, but that their various meanings and connotations must also be conveyed. Leach, Aoki points out, maintains "that the transmission of culture is not exhausted in the translation of language, but rather it consists in the translation of the poetic meaning of cultural codes" (50). There is no simple solution to this problem. Aoki suggests that it is necessary for – in his case – anthropologists to undergo a "momentary experience of 'Correspondence,' in which the anthropologist experiences him or herself as a stranger but also as him or herself" (51).

Because she is able to achieve this sort of correspondence, Akyūn succeeds in bringing two cultures together. She can unite the stranger and the self without losing either

perspective and can regard both cultures, languages, and countries as both familiar and foreign. In this particular text, Akyün translates Turkish culture for German readers, German culture for Turkish readers, and both cultures for themselves and for German-language readers of other cultures. In this case, identity has multiple sources and scores of connecting points; thus, culture becomes a network.

Akyün's narrator arrives at this perspective by examining the familiar and the strange in each of her respective cultures. She becomes conscious of the differences between German and Turkish cultures through the observations of her friends: "It first occurred to me how very different it is from what is otherwise so common in Germany when I was in my mid-twenties and every now and then brought friends from my parallel world to my parents' house" (43). Here the narrator exhibits what W. E. B. DuBois would refer to as "double-consciousness, [the] sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (869). The idea of seeing oneself as others see, or may see, one is very prominent in *One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce*. In fact, the narrator introduces herself using other people's perceptions of her: "I'm a Turkish woman with a German passport, for politicians a prime example of successful integration, for German men forbidden exotic fruit, and for German women a reason to hate their hair" (35). It is clear that the narrator has created an identity for herself based at least partly on the way she is perceived, or wants to be perceived, by those around her. Furthermore, Akyün's treatment of stereotypes illustrates that she is conscious not only of how Germans and Turks may see one another, but also of how these assessments could appear to a third party.

Akyün's writing style conveys her emotions with respect to both cultures; she expresses criticism, affection, nostalgia, sarcasm, and hope. Her use of German is

immaculate, which reflects her fluency, familiarity, and ease with the language. Her imagery and manner of expression are vivid and creative, and at times they seem slightly exotic, showing that, in her writing as in her life, she has achieved a synthesis of multiple sources of influence and inspiration. Akyün's narrative also makes an effort to align her day-to-day existence with that of her readers. This is accomplished in a variety of ways, for example, including carefully crafted confessions, beauty tips, personal memories, and snippets of advice. These are often influenced by Turkish culture, and thus such topics are used to establish personal points of commonality and to provide the material for cultural connections.

Akyün's inclusion and description of recipes and food is perhaps the most prominent example of using a universal topic of conversation to create a link between the cultures she is describing and to reach out to and intrigue anyone else who may be reading the book. Akyün's narrator conveys Turkish culture to her German friends by sharing recipes with them, teaching them proverbs and sayings, introducing them to her family, and – most importantly – through direct description. Yet her text also describes German culture. It brings to light the stereotypes both cultures hold about one another as well as the stereotypes both cultures are believed to hold about one another.

Throughout the book, Akyün describes numerous differences between Germans and Turks. Because the narrator relates her story within the framing context of her attempts to find a suitable German boyfriend – a boyfriend with "hot sauce," or what she feels to be the passion common to Turkish men and, in her experience, lacking in German men – her commentary often deals with the differing perceptions of gender roles and what constitutes femininity. According to her Turkish girlfriends,

> a Turkish woman is warm and tender. She is like a silk cloth that one tosses upwards and that floats back down in gentle cascades. She is strong and robust and can combine everything: family, children, and career, without compromising her femininity in the process. (Akyün 38)

The narrator wonders to herself how her Turkish girlfriends would perceive her German girlfriends, women who wear pantsuits, have no children, and are not married, who pursue their ambitions and give their career priority over everything else. Akyün points out the advantages and disadvantages of both positions, and, in particular, those of her own.

In her descriptions of both the German and Turkish cultures, Akyün employs stereotypes and plays to fantasies and misperceptions that seem to over-simplify the cultures and intercultural experiences of the narrator. Such clichés do not further intercultural knowledge and understanding. However, if the reader were to recognize these stereotypes and imaginative misperceptions as such, he or she could analyze their sources and effects. In this case, such a strategy could serve to expose stereotypes. Thus *One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce* does indeed encourage intercultural understanding in that it has the potential to awaken the reader's interest and compel him or her to ask questions and reflect on important themes.

Akyün makes fascinating and often confusing use of stereotypes and exoticism. This is evident in the way she describes the narrator's process of identity construction as well as in her descriptions of the German and Turkish cultures. She has clearly fashioned her narrative voice – both in terms of behavior and appearance – to correspond to the "fantasy" of the beautiful, sensual, and mysterious Oriental woman. Meyda Yeğenoğlu describes the

lure of this fantasy, which has been prevalent in Western society since the birth of colonialism:

> What was capital in this fantasy was the surplus pleasure, the useless *jouissance* which the voluminous cloth was supposed to veil and the colonial subject, thus hidden, was supposed to enjoy. Every effort to strip away the veil was clearly an aggression against the bloated presence of this pleasure that would not release itself into the universal pool. (Yeğenoğlu 46)

Akyün appears to lift the "veil," as it were, and allow "Western" readers a glimpse into the life of the Oriental "Other." The identity she creates for herself through her narrator feeds this sort of exoticism. Throughout the book she makes constant reference to her own beauty and passionate nature. She combines these qualities with independence, self-confidence, and a liberal sexuality that make her "oriental charms" accessible to Westerners. The narrator portrays herself as embodying the best features of the two cultures. However, what we see in her description of Turkish culture is a composite of the stereotypes upon which Orientalist fantasies have been based for centuries. For example, Akyün describes Turkish women in a *hamam*, or traditional Turkish bath house:

> it's as if precious paintings are being unveiled: beauties with hip-long black hair, tiny birthmarks on their dark skin, and golden points gleaming in their eyes. The women who take care of the hamam guests are so enchanting they look as though they've just come out of a harem. Their faces resemble those of Persian princesses, their eyes are like the oil from the Caspian Sea [...]. (110)

Akyün contrasts the identity she has constructed for her narrator with a stereotypical portrayal of the German people: passionate and generous vs. stingy and emotionally unavailable. She describes Germans according to the stereotypes held about them by Turkish people:

> We Turks call all Germans Hans and Helga. And it is clear that Hans is a good man, who is willing to go to the baker early in the morning to fetch the rolls. On a first date, he likes to come on his bicycle with a colorful helmet and a pants protector meant to keep his trousers from getting dirty [...]. When the waiter asks if they'd like to pay together or separately, Hans answers politely and properly – and at most with a bashful glance at Helga – "separately." As for Helga, she would never go to the hairdresser simply to have her hair blown dry. She never wears heels higher than four centimeters, nor does she know what the perfect arch of a tweezed eyebrow looks like. She is, however, interested in finding out. (37)

Akyün exposes stereotypes, and in doing so deconstructs them. The attentive reader will be able to pick up on this.

Akyün uses her family as her principle example to show how varied each individual life can be. Her parents regard the life of their daughter as "pitiable and quite sad" (14), while she is perfectly content with it. The lifestyles chosen by her siblings differ not only from her own, but also from those of each other. She describes her brother Mustafa as "the cliché incarnate" (109). He embodies the stereotypes held about Turks: "exaggeratedly masculine behavior, boundless overestimation of his own abilities, BMW driver, Media Markt customer, cell phone fanatic, blond girlfriend, gelled hair, leather jacket, Adidas tear-

aways, and gold jewelry" (113). However, her other brother is completely different – a successful businessman who values ambition, diligence, and punctuality. One of her sisters lives in Turkey, another is devoutly religious. Akyün's answer to the debate about headscarves emphasizes the importance of individuality in intercultural contexts, and also makes apparent how little attention people pay to this fact. She writes:

> Doubtless there are Muslim women and girls who are forced to wear a head scarf. But there are even more women like Ablam, for whom the head scarf is a symbol of their religious affiliation, worn with pride and of their own free will. Not even within my family can we reach a prevailing agreement on how a woman should present herself in public. How should the entire Islamic world agree on it? (199)

Without a comprehensive understanding of a culture, it can be difficult to understand how multifaceted it is. Thus stereotypes emerge. By exposing stereotypes for what they are, and thus deconstructing them, Akyün makes it possible to recognize this variety. The narrator describes her attempt to convince a former boyfriend that "there are vastly different lifestyles among Turkish people – just as there are among Germans" (195). Yet he cannot rid himself of his preconceived notions; for him Akyün would never be evidence to the contrary, but rather an exception.

Because she understands both sides, she can function as a translator. Now, the presence of a translator does not necessitate a single specific text – or culture, worldview, or solution. German cultural theorist Doris Bachmann-Medick argues that the development of a new "intercultural" language or approach to communication that focuses on translation and translatability will be necessary for the advancement of cultural studies. Both culture and

language consist of codes, norms, and symbols that must be interpreted in order to garner meaning. Bachmann-Medick claims that this new intercultural language must facilitate the process of translation and the mutual understanding of concepts, histories, and practices not only between cultures, but also between those scientific disciplines that observe and investigate cultural transfer.

Achieving this demands a move beyond dialogue. Bachmann-Medick suggests that, instead of using dialogue to bridge over differences, these differences should be focused upon. An open portrayal of social and cultural contradictions and conflicts is necessary and translation must be regarded as a "continual process of rearticulation and recontextualisation" (396, my translation). A translation is in no way a final result, but rather a step in the process of conveying ideas, which are themselves never static. Consequently, the process of translation must be just as carefully observed, analyzed, and constantly reconsidered as the texts and/or cultures being translated. This manner of translation makes it possible for difference to survive and proliferate, and for the understanding of difference to do the same.

By acting as a cultural facilitator, Akyün strives to bring difference, and the acceptance and appreciation of difference, to the forefront in her text. She draws the reader's attention to a number of important points. Yet she often does so by saying less instead of more. She provides detailed descriptions of her culture, but there is also a great deal that she does not discuss. Her departure from her parents' house and "rebellion against the Turkish tradition of marriage" (206) are mentioned on multiple occasions, but never described in detail. In the "Acknowledgements" at the end of the book, she writes "I'd like to thank my

father, who opened his arms again for his lost daughter" (208), which clearly indicates that there was, at one point, a significant conflict within the family.

Neither does Akyün address the much reported violence against Turkish women. Gender rolls are mentioned in the context of the narrator's family, and the Turkish and German perceptions of femininity are clearly contrasted. But the reader is never confronted with the extremes. The questions then arise: how often do such extremes actually come to pass, and what sort of bias is shown in the media? Akyün's positive viewpoint contrasts that of others. Zaimoglu writes of the Turkish woman: "She lives under house arrest, cut off from the outside world, and, for every stranger [...] unreachable" (15, my translation).

The heated debate over who has a right, or a responsibility, to speak for whom has no simple solution. Certain groups refuse to speak for others. They maintain that each human being can fully understand only his or her personal experiences and unique "truth," and therefore should not attempt to describe the "truths" of others. In their book *Who can Speak?* Judith Roof and Robyn Wiegman suggest that:

> Persons from dominant groups who speak for others are often treated as authenticating presences that confer legitimacy and credibility on the demands of subjugated speakers; such speaking for others does nothing to disrupt the discursive hierarchies that operate in public spaces. For this reason, the work of privileged authors who speak on behalf of the oppressed is becoming increasingly criticized by members of those oppressed groups. (99)

When privileged individuals speak for oppressed individuals, their statements deliver an inaccurate picture of the situation and the harmful constellation of privileged and oppressed

remains unchanged. On the other hand, it can easily be seen as an abdication of responsibility when someone who is in a position to speak freely refuses to speak out for others.

While it may be easy for readers and critics to fault Akyün for not comprehensively addressing the issues they expect to be prominent in literature dealing with immigration and integration, it is important to remember that Akyün does in fact touch on these themes in her own way and offers a refreshing, reassuring, and very sensible perspective. The informational "gaps" in *One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce* force the reader to ask questions about what is not said, and why it is not said, and to more carefully consider the significance of what is said. Instead of addressing certain controversial issues directly and in detail, Akyün provokes the reader's interest by mentioning, though not exhausting, subjects. Furthermore, she presents them in a manner very different from that commonly encountered in the media. Therefore, in addition to spurring her readers on to further investigation, Akyün provides us with a new perspective from which to begin our inquiry. We are shown how different individual experiences and lifestyles can be, even though they all take place "within" the context of one culture – a fact that is all too often forgotten when one is dealing with cultures other than one's own. When asked in an interview about the issue of Turkish women being forced into marriage and otherwise oppressed and abused, Akyün responded as follows:

> I do not deny what is reported in the media. Of course there are forced marriages, honor killings, and women who are not permitted to leave their houses. But it's an extremely small number. By contrast, there are thousands and thousands of Turkish girls and women in this country who live

> completely normal lives. I have written a book that represents a young German-Turkish woman's normalcy. At least it is representative for many of the Turkish women I know. […]. There is nothing written in the Koran about honor killings. That is not Islamic, nor is it Turkish. Is a woman, a German mother, who lets her child starve, typically German? No, she's inhuman. People don't differentiate here. ("Für meine Familie," my translation)

She went on to explain her motivations for choosing and shaping her subject matter as she did:

> I [...] never intended to write a sociological book. It was my intention to show how a Turkish family in Germany can live. Of course, I could have focused on three or four problematic aspects in my life. Xenophobia, arranged marriage, or the topic of "My Traditional Turkish Family." I could have created a wonderfully problem-laden book out of these. But that would have been only five percent of my life. My day-to-day existence is simply different. ("Für meine Familie," my translation)

One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce foregrounds the new cultures, languages, and identities that can result from the meeting of two, or more, cultures. This situation provides a fascinating challenge for the translator, in that he or she must find his or her way through complicated cultural networks. Many of the questions that occupy translators are also central to the field of cultural studies. José Lambert proposes "that the nationalistic world view is in no way adequate in the field of cultural research and that we require a new, scientific world view in order to systematically chart the complexity of the cultural process." He goes on to describe the "necessity of a cartography, or better yet, a new cartography, that should

never operate as a static conception of the world" (95). Just as the concept of hybridity has slowly changed over time, effective translation strategies must be similarly malleable to accommodate the new cultures and uses of language that are being produced at an increasing rate.

Note on the Translation

Hatice Akyün's book *Einmal Hans mit scharfer Soße* was an exciting choice for a translation project because it has the potential to pique the interest of a wide spectrum of English readers. It is an engaging and entertaining story that also offers readers a great deal of information about major cultural groups in Central Europe. The text is relevant to many current literary discourses – cultural and literary studies, women's writing, migrant and migration literature – and, given that it is a translation of a book that itself deals with translation, it is particularly intriguing from a translation studies point of view. Therefore, it would be of interest to a general readership as well as in academic contexts.

Furthermore, this book represents an important point of view – and a point of view that will continue to gain in importance. Akyün privileges individuality and emphasizes the fact that we must learn to appreciate one another as individuals, regardless of cultural heritage, in order to coexist and communicate effectively in a world characterized by increasing mobility and cultural exchange.

In order to translate this book effectively, it was necessary to translate two cultures – the Turkish and the German. Akyün translates most of the Turkish words she uses into German and explains the Turkish customs and traditions. Because she writes in German,

presumably for a German audience, Akyün provides thorough descriptions of the Turkish traditions, phrases, and viewpoints that she includes in her text. Those aspects of German culture that may not be immediately recognizable to an English audience are, naturally, not explained. Thus it was necessary to do a great deal of research into German culture and traditions, as well as Turkish.

The question then arose as to whether those aspects of German culture not readily apparent to English readers should be explained and, if so, how the explanations should fit into the text. Footnotes make additional information more immediately accessible to those who wish to take advantage of it, however they can disturb the flow of the text for those who would rather read for entertainment. Endnotes, in contrast, do not disturb or distract a reader who is not interested in additional information, but still provides this information for one who is. Therefore, assuming that this translation could be intended for both general and academic readers, endnotes were chosen over footnotes to provide facts and explanations regarding German culture. Also, endnotes contribute to the retention of a certain degree of "foreignness." When translating a text dealing with, and written in the context of, another culture or multiple other cultures, it is necessary to maintain this sense of difference for the reader. For example, there is a chain of stores in Germany called "Aldi." When a translator encounters a name that would not be recognizable to English readers, he or she is presented with a number of choices. He or she can leave the name without explanation, trusting that the reader will gather the meaning from context, leave the name and add a foot- or endnote explaining it, weave an explanation into the text, or replace the name with that of a similar chain known to English readers. The last-named option was rejected because it would erode the text's foreignness, "colonizing" it, or adapting it to the North American cultural sphere.

Instead, all instances of names, cultural characteristics, and traditions that may not be immediately clear are explained in endnotes, as this maintains the integrity of the translation and allows readers to retain the sense that they are encountering a culture different from their own, but at the same time provides the necessary explanation if the reader should wish to seek it out.

Similarly, the inclusion of text in different languages, or the reproduction of dialect or sociolect contributes to an enlightening sense of foreignness. One of the most enjoyable challenges in translating this book was adapting the author's rendition of various types of "broken German." She imitates her brother's "Kanak Deutsch," her mother's refusal to use articles in her sentences, and her father's incorrect word order. As previously mentioned, Akyün's brother speaks a form of Creole. Reproducing a translated version of this sociolect in another language is a fascinating challenge for a translator. How does one translate sounds, accents, and difficulties in speaking? It would be possible to replace this "Kanak Deutsch" with a variation of English commonly used by immigrants and easily recognizable to English readers. However any one of these sociolects, or accents, would carry with it far too many connotations and associations. Therefore, it was necessary to create something new.

Though an answer to this problem may not be immediately obvious, it is clear that the developmental histories of these modes of speech are of importance here. They are used for different reasons and an understanding of them is necessary in order to translate cultural significance along with words and phrases. In his book *Kanak Sprak: 24 Misstöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft* Zaimoglu writes:

> Long ago, [German-Turks] developed an underground code, and they speak their own jargon: "Kanak-Sprak," a sort of Creole or argot with secret symbols and signs. Their speech is related to the freestyle sermon in rap; there, as here, one only speaks from a pose. This language adjudicates on existence: one offers a completely private performance in words. The force behind the Kanak's words manifests itself in a squeezed-out, short-winded, and hybrid babble without periods or commas, with arbitrarily placed pauses and improvised turns of phrase. The Kanak speaks his native language deficiently, "Germanish" is also only partially familiar to him. His vocabulary is composed of a gobbledygook of words and expressions that do not appear in either [German or Turkish]. (Zaimoglu 13, my translation)

Zaimoglu collects the testimonies of his conversation partners by recording them on tape. Afterwards, their oral statements must be transcribed into text. His task is then to create a "self-contained, visible, and consequently 'authentic' image of a language" (Zaimoglu 18, my translation). It was necessary, in this case, for the translator to do something similar, though on a much smaller scale, in order to translate Akyün's description of her brother's speech. The key is consistency.

Zaimoglu also compares Kanak Deutsch with the language of the "Black consciousness movement" (17, my translation) in the USA. In doing this, he attempts to show the extent to which Kanak Deutsch has developed and, in addition, to prove that it is a new, unique, and intentionally utilized manner of expression, not simply the consequence of poor language skills. Other instances are not so complicated however. The way in which Akyün's mother changes her German words – by adding vowels to make the German

pronunciation easier – is quite simple to translate. Regardless of the complexity, it is still absolutely necessary to remain consistent in translation choices.

In addition to the transcription of sociolect, there are a number of creative uses of language in this text that it took a great deal of work and deliberation to find suitable equivalents for. One of the most confusing examples of this was the author's invention of a character she refers to as a "Flannelhosenträger." The author is not talking about suspenders made out of flannel, but rather about men who wear flannel trousers. Now, considering that she makes a very stark comparison between these wearers of flannel slacks and "real men," the word carries with it a huge variety of potential, though all indefinite, connotations. In the end, so as not to imply anything that was not intended, or to make blatant an inferred subtle reference to effeminate males, I chose to translate it as "the boys in flannel slacks." The alternative – "pretty boys lounging about in their flannel slacks" – seemed excessive, making explicit something at most implied. This would have resulted in a loss, in the translation, of the subtlety of the original text.

Because there are frequent puns, plays on words, and inventive uses of language in this text, translating demanded at times difficult decisions regarding how much to read into the text – as exemplified by the men in flannel slacks. A further example would be the translation of the word "Fleicheslust," which, literally translated, means "desire for meat." The narrator uses this word when explaining that, in his advancing age, her father still eats a great deal of meat: "No, my father's desire for meat is in no way dwindling, rather his enthusiasm for setting up and lighting the barbecue" (61). Another option for the translation of "Fleicheslust" would have been "fleshly desire," which would have evoked connotations of virility, as well as references to religious texts – "Fleicheslust" appears in German

religious texts in precisely this sense. Though this would have been very interesting, it was believed to be bringing more into the text than may have been intended and so the translator adhered to a simple, literal translation.

A further example can be found at the beginning of the book, when the narrator introduces the characters of Hans and Helga. In the original, Hans is described as "ein braver Brötchenholer." "Brav" means good or diligent, but also implies well-behaved or obedient, and a "Brötchenholer" is someone – usually a husband – who gets up in the morning to fetch fresh rolls from the bakery (36). The word "Brötchenholer" is, however, tantalizingly close to "Brötchengeber," which has the more figurative meaning of "breadwinner," the person who earns the money and supports the family. Again, it was not clear whether the author intended to make a pun, and in doing so to imply that Hans would not only fetch the rolls in the morning, but could also be relied upon to provide financial support, or whether she was simply referring to the fact that Hans would be willing to make early morning trips to the bakery. It is important to note, however, that the term "Brötchengeber" can also be used to refer to one's employer or source of income. Consequently, in this case the translator opted again for the more literal interpretation.

In cases where there is ambiguity as to the connotations of the original text, this translation strove to maintain that ambiguity to the greatest extent possible in the translation. Thus, a reader of the translation is as free as a reader of the original to derive whatever meaning he or she chooses from the text.

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1. Latest News From the Parallel World

My name is Hatice. I'm a Turkish woman with a German passport, for politicians a prime example of successful integration, for German men forbidden exotic fruit, and for German women a reason to hate their hair. In a personal ad, I could describe myself as a "hot-blooded woman of the south with a fiery temper and hips amply suited for child-bearing." And no, my name translated does not mean "dawn-blossoming, dew-bedecked sunflowers of the Anatolian hills." My name doesn't mean anything. Or at least nothing more than Helga or Nicole.

The first wife of our Prophet Mohammed was named Hatice, she was the first Muslim woman. A Persian man who once tried to pick me up in a bar told me that my name meant something along the lines of "she whom men cannot resist." Just to be sure, I googled it at home and found out that "she whom men cannot resist" sounds a lot different, and perhaps the Persian just liked to spout poetic nonsense, but he couldn't fool me for long with that one.

I am a journalist, which means I work a lot, have little money and even less time. I don't wear a head scarf, and I wasn't forced into marriage, which is why I still don't have a husband. Once in a while I go on holiday, mostly to Turkey, where my parents own a summer cottage and my relatives take care to greet me with the same words every time: "Have you finally found your Hans?" When my family isn't in Turkey, I visit them regularly

in Duisburg, where they also own a house, and all receive me with the exact same words: "Have you finally found your Hans?"

We Turks call all Germans Hans and Helga. And it is clear that Hans is a good man who is willing to go to the baker early in the morning to fetch the rolls. On a first date, he likes to come on his bicycle with a colorful helmet and a pants protector meant to keep his trousers from getting dirty. With his egg-shaped helmet, his head hunched down into his shoulders and legs churning rapidly, he looks a bit like a toad out for a walk. The rolled-up trousers, the pasty legs, and the pressure mark that his helmet leaves on his forehead destroy any desire for him whatsoever, and any woman would inevitably develop a panicky fear of ever having to see Hans with no trousers on. When the waiter asks if they'd like to pay together or separately, Hans answers politely and properly – and at most with a bashful glance at Helga – "separately."

As for Helga, she would never go to the hairdresser simply to have her hair blown dry. She never wears heels higher than four centimeters, nor does she know what the perfect arch of a tweezed eyebrow looks like. She is, however, interested in finding out. And one can sit with the two of them the entire evening and have a marvelous discussion with Hans and Helga.

We also know that Hans walks his dog and collects his little piles of droppings in a baggie. He puts his furniture together according to the instructions and works carefully and attentively. The right tool can always be found dutifully occupying its proper place in his toolbox, and, should a problem arise, he takes the piece of furniture back to the salesperson, complains about the shoddy instructions, and demands that the annoyance be rectified.

Fatma, one of my sisters who has lived in Turkey since her wedding, can't understand why I'm determined to find a German man. "Why do you do that to yourself?" she yells into the phone as she sits on her balcony in Izmir drinking tea. There are so many things that make Fatma just shake her head. Like, for example, when I tell her about my daily ration of whole-grain bread, or about my German friends and their families who see each other only at Christmas. Or the fact that they all live their own lives and all have their own apartments. "Don't you get lonely?" she asks me, her voice sounding worried. I explain to her that I work a lot and that I'm happy to come home at night and not have to see anyone. "You're doing something wrong," she says, when she hears my tired voice.

Of course I'm doing something wrong. I'm trying to make it in two worlds that simply can't be reconciled with one another. I don't understand myself how, upon returning to Berlin from Turkey, I won't be able to sleep at night because a girlfriend there has extracted some dire prediction out of coffee grounds.

I hadn't yet finished my Turkish mocha when she snatched the delicate golden cup out of my hand and deciphered the sentence reflected on the bottom. She then bowed forward, cracked her ten fingers, and said, in words pregnant with meaning, "Let's see what love will bring you."

"Ah, actually, I'd really rather not know," I said cautiously.

"Oh, you have some troubles, but you'll soon be free of them," she continued on unperturbed. "I see it because almost all the grounds have freed themselves from the edge of the cup. There will be a turning point in your job. I see two competitors. A strong man will disappear and clear your path to the top."

"Great," I thought. "Perhaps there is something to this?"

"You'll meet a tall man, a German Hans, but you won't stay with him for long."

"But I want to stay with him," I entreated.

"You'll meet a short man and conceive a son with him," she read further with firm resolution.

"No, stop. Go back to the tall man; I like tall men. Tall, blond, blue-eyed men. And besides, I want a daughter," I cried and tried to tear the cup out of her hand.

"One can't outsmart fate," she laughed mysteriously. Then she turned her own cup briskly around, glanced at the coffee grounds only for a moment, gazed out the window where the sun had just begun to set on the horizon and the fishing boats bobbed by the shore in a yellowy golden light, and smiled contentedly to herself.

In spite of all this, I remain true to my preferences. My girlfriends in Turkey maintain that I am almost like a German. "You have a cold heart; where is your sensuousness and passion?" they ask me. "You can make the best career for yourself, be the richest and most beautiful woman, but if you cannot feel love and warmth for a man, then you are not a proper woman." They say that a Turkish woman is warm and tender. She is like a silk shawl that one tosses upwards and that floats back down in gentle cascades. She is strong and robust and can combine everything: family, children, and career, without compromising her femininity in the process.

Indeed, how would my Turkish friends find my German friends who, in their designer pantsuits, with tightly pulled back hair and suppressed maternal instincts, have to hold their own daily in a male-dominated executive world, if *I* have already lost my femininity in their eyes?

Turks call Germans "hırslı," the ambitious ones. They admire their purposefulness and consistency, but also see the price that Hans and Helga must pay for these qualities. They both have to decide, clearly and unequivocally: either children or career. In Turkey one has children regardless of whether or not one is employed. The extended family, however, is also always there and delighted to finally have the pleasure of looking after small children again.

Incidentally, I haven't found the right Hans yet. I haven't met a Hans who would be passionate and gallant enough – as is the common practice in Turkey – to open the car door for me, a Hans with hot sauce, so to speak. And Turkish men don't dare get near me anymore. Consequently, I'm the problem child of my family.

You don't know my family yet? Then come, sit down, and don't forget to bring something to eat, because that's what one does in my family. And get ready for a long and enjoyable afternoon! I shall carry you off to a Germany that you – I guarantee – aren't familiar with yet. A country with stories from 1001 Nights in the middle of the Ruhr Valley, because that's where my father, a farmer from Anatolia, first moved in order to find work.[2] One could almost say that we are a completely normal Turkish Gastarbeiter family in Germany.[3] But prepare yourself for a long trip, because what we have here is something like the entrance into another universe.

Oh yes, and one more thing: Even if no one else believes it – I shall find my Hans; we shall have lots of daughters, and he will hold the car door open for me and pay for me in restaurants (me having of course been to the hair dresser just to have my hair blown dry). And on the following morning, he will fetch rolls and the newspaper for breakfast!

2. Gold-rimmed Mocha Glasses

May I introduce you to my family? There's my father, who doesn't look at all Turkish with his green eyes, but who sets up his barbecue in the backyard year-round. He would like to be patriarch of the house, but four daughters, six granddaughters, and his full-blooded Anatolian wife don't allow him many opportunities for advancement in this role.

My father is full of yearning for home – according to where he is at any given time. When he is in Germany, he complains about the bad weather, the watery tomatoes, or the lifeless Germans, and he is regularly seized by the desire to set out for Turkey. However, these days, my father knows Turkey only in the summer. He spends the winter in Germany because the central heating in his house in Duisburg functions much better. Here he rhapsodizes about blue oceans and the fertile soil in his garden, he longs for the muezzin's call to prayer, the smell of the bazaars, and he misses the people's geniality – people with whom he can always chat on the street.

However, he's no sooner arrived back in Turkey than he's complaining about the poor-quality cars, the corrupt authorities, power outages, and the miserable Turkish healthcare system. His yearning for Germany overwhelms him, and he longs feverishly for his health insurance chip card and his Mercedes.

My father would never drive any car but a Mercedes. He's always been conscious of quality when it comes to his means of transportation. He got off his horse in our Anatolian village Akpınar Köyü, came to Germany, and quickly bought himself a brand new Mercedes. Every four years he exchanges it for a newer model. The only thing that changes is the color.

My mother, by contrast, is somewhat less complicated than my father when it comes to the question of her home. As long as there are adequate Turkish vegetable stands, butchers, and supermarkets for her to procure enough groceries for her numerous mealtimes she doesn't care which country she is in at any given time. Sometimes, though, she misses the Aldi when she's been in Turkey for too long.[4]

There are two laws where my mother is concerned that hold for us without exception: She is the only one allowed to ride in the passenger seat of the Mercedes, and she is always right. Even when she's wrong, she's right, and it would never occur to anyone in the family to contradict her. As soon as someone criticizes her, the angry lines on her forehead scrunch together, she rears up and laments in a tremulous voice: "I carried you in my belly for nine months, I breastfed you for six months; of all my six children you were the most difficult. Is this the thanks I get for my efforts?"

Her eyes get very small and she withdraws, injured, to the corner of the sofa. Then you have to put your arms around her and tell her how marvelous she is and that paradise exists only where she treads. However, my mother does not always respond to shallow words. She doesn't make it easy for us, because she's a pure-bred Turkish woman. In this particular situation, the only thing that will help is the highest possible recognition of the achievements of a Turkish mother – humble behavior and the promise to always drive her to and from shopping in the future. Sometimes even that doesn't suffice to bring about

reconciliation; then the Turkish father has to intervene to convince her that the entire family would be lost without her. When she gets up and walks mumbling into the kitchen, it's a sign that her anger is slowly dissipating.

In addition to these harmless spats, there are situations where my mother explodes like a prematurely detonated bomb. And no one knows exactly why. I remember one day, when my father had gone to the mosque. My mother and I wanted to take the streetcar to go shopping. We set out together and passed a construction site on our way. Two construction workers were standing in a shallow pit and fiddling with black cables. My mother pulled me along by my sleeve. At this point, one of the men whistled at us. My mother let go of my arm, ran the five meters back, took off her right shoe in front of the pit and cried, "You asseholle, you piig." Then she hit both the young men over the head with her rubber-soled Deichmann shoe. She then proceeded to put her shoe back on and walk with me to the streetcar stop as if nothing had happened.

The men in the pit rubbed their heads and stared after my mother and me with their mouths hanging open. They'd never expected this reaction – certainly not from a Turkish woman wearing a head scarf. To this day I don't know why my mother reacted with such shock and disgust to a harmless whistle. My father said that it's inappropriate and disrespectful to whistle at a Turkish woman and that my mother, with her Anatolian pride, had felt insulted and hurt. All the while, he looked into the kitchen, watched my mother standing by the stove, and smiled at her lovingly.

Anyone who comes to visit us doesn't get to know only my parents, but also inevitably becomes acquainted with their oriental furnishings. The living room is a veritable sofa-landscape. My father shows off with his Mercedes, my mother with her furniture

ensembles. She is the proud owner of two sofa beds, a foam sofa with three cushions, a foam sofa with two cushions, and two matching chairs in gray and brown with a floral pattern. There is also a lighted wall unit with a built-in display case in our living room, the glass in which is also decorated in a floral pattern. In the display case my mother keeps gold-rimmed tea glasses, gold-rimmed mocha glasses, gold-rimmed vases, and dozens of gold-rimmed picture frames containing photos of various representatives of our substantial extended family. In the four-meter-long unit, three coffee sets, three table settings, pressure cookers, and multiple Teflon pans stand at attention.

I am so used to this manner of furnishing that for years I didn't notice it. It first occurred to me how very different it is from what is otherwise so common in Germany when I was in my mid-twenties and every now and then brought friends from my parallel world to my parents' house. It's the same with the German that my parents speak. My mother doesn't like consonants. She finds it difficult to pronounce two together because this happens very rarely in Turkish, and when it does, then only at the end of a word. To avoid the problem, my mother simply inserts a vowel between any two consonants. She travels to "Kölün," lives in "Düsburug," her daughters look in the "miraror" much too often, our uncle lives in "Schututtgart," our cousin lives in "Nürünberg," her son Mustafa should watch the "stareet" while driving, and my father sweeps the "garavel" out of the entryway.

The German articles – three ways of saying "the" – also give her trouble. "What are they good for?" she asks me indignantly, when I explain to her that it's "*der* Tisch," "*die* Speisen" and "*die* Freude."[5] I tell her that sentences would sound very awkward if one were simply to leave the articles out, and I give her an example: "When the food is on the table, there is great joy." In Turkish, there is no grammatical gender; nothing is male, female, or

neuter. My mother thinks it's nonsense to turn everything into men and women and asks if these tiny and ambiguous parts of speech are really necessary because, up until this point, everyone has understood her perfectly when she says "When food on table, everyone very happy."

In comparison to my mother, my father has minimal difficulty with the German language. "My daughter work always a lot" he reports to his neighbors. When I try to teach my father the proper word order for German sentences or to correct his pronunciation, he tells me I should just be quiet because, after all, he taught me my first German word, and I couldn't "pronaounce" it. Apparently, instead of saying five when asked what our house number was, I answered "tiff." My cautious objection that, at the time, I was only three years old carries no weight with him.

By contrast, my younger brother Mustafa has trouble with Turkish. Many of the words that he often uses he doesn't know in Turkish and therefore helps himself along with creative inventions. He says: "employmentcentera gitmem" (I'm not going to the employment center) or: "doctor sick yazdı" (the doctor put me on sick leave). After I had consulted the Langenscheidt's Turkish-German Pocket Dictionary, I advised him that he should go to the "Iş ve Işçi Bulma Kurumuna" (employment center) and that "ciddi bir hastalığın olmadan rapor alarak işe gitmemek" (absenteeism) would certainly not increase his chances of keeping a job. I'm quite certain anyway that he makes himself pretty damn comfortable in the "sosyal hamak," the "soziale Hängematte" or social support network.[6]

Mustafa is, besides me, the other black sheep in the family. He is in his early twenties and a rogue who does business in cell phones and brand-name clothing. Sometimes I benefit

from his dealings; he sells me things extremely cheap because I am, after all, his "seesta." He is a macho guy with some pretty lovable characteristics, and he could speak perfect German, except he doesn't want to. When I ask him how it's going with his new girlfriend, he answers: "Eh, I hava baroken up wit she." So then I correct him: "Mustafa, you mean, 'I broke up with her.'" And he says real cool, with a crooked smile: "Isa giirrl, is 'she.'" And when his current girlfriend stands in front of the wardrobe and asks him what she should wear, he simply answers in passing: "the shopping bags."

My other brother Mehmet is better adjusted and less aggressive. He is in his late twenties and ten years ago he opened his first specialty computer store, where he explained new technologies to Turkish customers, and did so in the language they understood – in Turkish. He now owns three booming stores in the Ruhr Valley and is the epitome of the successful Turk. When asked about his Turkish characteristics, he emphasizes his ambition, his constant diligence, and his invariable punctuality, and I can't help but realize that he looks a little bit like the heartthrob Justin Timberlake.

With him, I have never been able to rely on characteristics like courage, pride, and defense of honor – which for me are genuinely Turkish. In fact, quite the opposite. When my first boyfriend broke up with me, I went to my brother and demanded: "Go get the idiot; sort this out for me. He humiliated your sister. You're Turkish! Why is nothing happening here?" He looked at me cautiously and said: "Wouldn't you rather try talking to him again?"

And there are still my three sisters. When I feel the need for passion and hot-bloodedness, I am always in the best hands when I turn to my younger sister Fatma, who has lived in Turkey since her wedding. She is usually sitting on the balcony when I call and always has time for me. "Why do you do that to yourself?" she asks me once more, when

I tell her about my stressful working life. "I'm sitting here, drinking tea. My husband is at work, and the kids are at school, and later I'm going to the hairdresser." She is always sporting the trendiest hairstyles, her nails are painted red, her eyebrows are perfectly tweezed. Shortly before her husband comes home, she hurries out shopping so that there's something in the house to eat.

Her husband grew up in Izmir on the Aegean coast of Turkey. He comes from a very good family, is educated, and knows Anatolian villages only from television. In order to show him Germany, Fatma convinced him to spend their honeymoon in Duisburg. That was over ten years ago, and since then he refuses to travel with her to Germany. He says that the dirty air makes him sick, that the weather is abysmal, and that the Germans are grouchy. Now my sister says so too and wrinkles her nose at my dull, gray life in Germany.

My youngest sister's name is Elif, she's also married and lives with her family in the Ruhr Valley. She married a German-Turk, whom she met at McDonald's. With him she has two daughters and a son, who hardly speak any Turkish, and a satellite dish, which she and her family suck dry on a daily basis.

Elif is a young German-Turk who buys her clothes at H&M, her groceries at a German supermarket, and spends her summer holidays at Turkish vacation spots, but who, since the birth of her two daughters, collects items for their trousseaus in the wardrobe in her bedroom. The two girls won't be thinking about marriage for a long while yet, but Elif couldn't start early enough – sewing frills on bedding and pearls on slippers, adorning innocent hand towels with flowered braid trimming and white napkins with gold borders. Tablecloths, crocheted doilies, and tulle curtains are stacked in her drawers. She insists that a Turkish bride needs all these things to set up and furnish her future apartment. "I had to

sew my trousseau by hand," she says when her daughters wrinkle their noses. She stores two baskets on top of the wardrobe; these she has covered with the finest white satin. They will one day contain the underwear, stockings, head scarves, and slippers that she intends to give her daughters when they marry.

My oldest sister's name is actually Gönül, but we five younger siblings call her Abla. That means big sister, and all big sisters are called Abla. When I talk about her I say "Ablam," my big sister. She is the mouthpiece of the family, and whenever I would like to have information about my parents, with Abla I've gone to the right place.

And that leaves me: five years ago, I moved to Berlin for a job. Since then, I travel back and forth between the two cities. In Berlin I do whatever I want, and when I come to Duisburg I stop for a moment on the edge of town and swap my short skirt for one that is knee length. Now I make these concessions to Turkish tradition. After all, in Duisburg, I'm a guest of my parents.

My parents have visited me in my Berlin life only once. And to be honest, they came primarily to attend a distant cousin's wedding. It would never have occurred to them to cover the 539 kilometers just to see their daughter.

My mother had hardly arrived at my apartment when, that very afternoon, she opened my fridge and promptly scrunched up her face in horror. There stood five cans of Cola-Light, two bottles of prosecco,[7] and a tin of face cream.

Alright, there were also a couple cereal bars, slices of whole-wheat bread, and a can of tomatoes, but they had passed their best-before date a good half year ago. My mother immediately wanted to know the way to the nearest Turkish supermarket. I answered proudly that I had reserved a table in a Turkish restaurant and that we would definitely eat

well there. "They can't cook better than I can," she brushed my suggestion aside and pulled my father energetically towards the door.

Three hours later the two of them returned from Kreuzberg with the Mercedes full to bursting.[8] They'd been shopping: tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, oranges, grapes, watermelons, meat, cheese, yogurt. A ten-pack of garlic bulbs, a five kilogram sack of onions, and a giant wheel of bread. Cans of tomato paste, beans and okra pods, rice, honey, bulgur wheat, and a couple pots and pans from a Turkish import-export store. We lugged, believe me, no less than ten tightly packed bags into my apartment. And my parents wanted to stay only for the weekend.

"No wonder you look so sick, when you don't eat anything," said my mother, while she tried, to no avail, to coax the oven to life. It hasn't worked since I moved into the apartment, and it never occurred to me to use it for anything other than a storage space for magazines.

My mother cooked for three hours and spiced every course that she prepared with some commentary: "You want to conquer the world and don't even own a ladle"; she peppered me with criticisms. After the main dish she called into the living room where I was playing "tavla" – Turkish backgammon – with my father: "What have I done wrong? What am I being punished for?" and demanded to know where the oven mitts were. "Oh, I lent those to somebody," I called back.

To my mother, my life is pitiable and quite sad. Because it's just not worth it to cook for one person, I have to go out to eat. For her, going out to eat is a punishment, and restaurants are for people who have no family. I, on the other hand, don't find my life at all pitiful and regard restaurants, fast-food stands, and pizza delivery service as wonderful

inventions. There are words that my mother necessarily links with other words; these pairs she regards as inseparable: women and kitchen, daughters and marriage, and food and family. When she was finished cooking, she came into the living room, looked at me reproachfully, and asked: "Is there a pot holder in this household?" No, of course there wasn't. And why should there be? I have only a single pot, and it's still in the cupboard in the original packing.

The three of us sat at my table and ate. I considered whether or not this would be the right time to tell my mother that, despite the fact that I lived a very different life than her other children, I was happy nonetheless. Just as I was about to start, she interrupted me and observed brusquely: "You write for all the magazines in the world, but don't own three matching plates." I decided that this was not the best time to discuss my big-city single-life, mumbled how wonderful the food tasted, and dreamed of once again being alone in my apartment.

Long after they had departed, I continued to live off my mother's provisions, as she had frozen large portions. I do indeed have a freezer, even if it never houses anything besides ice cubes for the prosecco and a mask to prevent swollen eyes. Months later, I got rid of the rest of the onions, potatoes, and garlic, because they had all begun to sprout wildly. It took me a year to dispose of everything. And to fill my fridge with Cola-Light and face cream again.

3. The Silence of the Lambs

For Turks, two things are necessary in life: eating and talking, in this order. A happy family is one whose fireplace is smoking at all times, and when one wishes someone ill, he curses his oven: "May the fire in your oven be extinguished" or "May a fig tree grow in place of your oven."

The kitchen has always been the center and lifeline of our house, and my mother, the heart of the kitchen. Every morning she comes into the kitchen, puts water on for tea, and groans: "Oh, what shall I cook today?" She stands at the stove, roasting, baking, or cooking a stew. At night she prepares yogurt and cheese, then makes dough for börek and bread; during the day she cuts vegetables and beheads chickens. When relatives come to visit, our house is full. Turks don't simply come to visit, they lay siege to the entire house. What, for Germans, is a perfectly planned, five-course menu for four people means, for Turks, standing unannounced at the door with the entire clan in tow. But even when guests arrive without notice, my mother always manages to conjure up at least ten different dishes within the hour. Turks live to eat.

A couple of weeks ago, I called my mother to tell her that I was coming to Duisburg. Before I let her know I was visiting, I looked in the Islamic calendar to see if there was any possible occasion my mother could use as a reason for preparing one of her banquets. Luckily it was a completely normal Saturday, and I was quite sure that, this time, she would respect my

request that she not cook so much. When I got to the house she greeted me with the words: "It's so nice that you came! Your brothers and sisters and nieces and nephews will be here soon too." How nice, I thought innocently, that the rest of the family is also dropping by.

"Great. You really pulled this off well," Ablam, my big sister, hissed her greeting at me. "Can't you come to visit without announcing it beforehand?"

"What happened?" I asked.

"Mother's taken your visit as an excuse to whirl around the kitchen with all of her twenty-five pots and has been driving us crazy for hours."

I had to offer in my defense, however, that it wasn't only delight at my visit that had moved my mother to her culinary orgy. Now that us kids have moved out, she misses standing at the stove and demonstrating her culinary prowess. Since then any occasion is reason enough. This time it just happened to be my visit.

Our dinner began with "gelin çorbası," the Turkish wedding soup. The steaming soup was still on the stove, but I could already feel how it would drip, hot and creamy and flavorful, down my throat. I had actually planned to hold back a bit, at least at the beginning, but the smell of the soup pervaded the entire house and caused my appetite to grow steadily. There is a Turkish saying that goes: "The way to the heart is down the throat." That counts for no dish more than for Turkish wedding soup. With the first spoonful I must close my eyes to completely and properly enjoy the tart, but at the same time mild, taste. Could a passionate kiss be more savory than this heavenly soup? It is a soup into which the soul sinks, as into the velvet-clad cushions in the boudoir of a Persian harem. The lamb is so soft and tender that it melts on your tongue. The pungent, sweetish fragrance of onions and butter

clouds my senses. The soup is full-bodied and voluptuous, like an Anatolian bride. It's topped off with flour, eggs, and milk.

After five spoonfuls, I was comfortably warm. Once we'd emptied our plates, our faces were aglow. I was reminded of the German wedding soup that I'd tried once – a broth with vegetables and royale. When even the wedding soup is so bland, it's no wonder there are so many divorces in Germany.

After the soup, my mother served "meze," the appetizers. They often strike people as being so sumptuous that, after they've been eaten, a Central European might think the meal is over. We ate "women thighs," small meatballs thus named because of their oblong shape. Many dishes are named after the female body, for example, "lady's navel" or "lips of the beautiful." Other dishes have more mysterious names like "tightly wound turban" or "nightingale's nest."

After the appetizers we ate "turşu," vegetables marinated in salt, garlic, and vinegar, and a dish called "Imam bayıldı" (the Imam fell unconscious). It's an eggplant dish in which the eggplants are peeled so as to produce a striped pattern. They're sliced, filled with a mixture of tomatoes, onions, garlic, and pepperoni, and then cooked in a quarter liter of oil. According to the legend, an Imam once enjoyed this dish so much that he ate until he lost consciousness.

My father has his own version of the story: An old Imam's young wife had received twelve jugs of olive oil as her dowry. Not long after the wedding there wasn't a drop of oil left. When the Imam heard that his wife had used up all the oil in preparing the eggplants, he sank to the floor unconscious. Honestly, I also believe this version because when you put a piece of this eggplant in your mouth and use your tongue to press it gently against your

gums, the finest olive oil drips out of the eggplant and runs down your throat. The fruit, fried golden brown and filled with tomatoes and onions, dissolves into pure delight on your tongue.

My mother's freezer is in the basement. And for good reason. It's actually so big that it wouldn't have fit in the kitchen. It has seven large drawers and is flanked by two small fridges. After all, you never know whether our Anatolian village might drop by unannounced. Our pantry is larger than our living room, and, even so, more provisions are spread out all over the house. For example, my mother keeps thirty bars of Milka chocolate with nuts, ten family packs of Tempo facial tissue, five packages of Zewa paper towels, and a bag of sunflower seeds in her closet.

When my parents go to Aldi or Real, they bring so much home that they could stock a supermarket, a haberdashery, and a drug store. To this day I've never understood why they immediately have to take three packages of everything they buy. They have mountains of serviettes, toilet paper, soap, toothpaste, and razorblades. Tomato paste, green beans, and okra pods they buy by the dozen simply on principle. Our supply cabinet is full of milk in tetra packs, coffee, wheat flour, and sugar. My mother stores the beverages under her bed. She piles crates of Fanta cans and tetra packs of ice tea and orange juice under there. Fruit that my mother would never buy in quantities of less than three kilos per sort – because otherwise it's just not worth it – she divides up between the four kitchen drawers originally intended for cutlery, pots, and bowls. These, in turn, are piled on top of the cabinets so that they reach to the ceiling.

When my mother's in Turkey, she spends all day walking through the markets in order to buy those things that she thinks aren't available in Germany. And it's absolutely not true, because now there are Turkish stores on every corner of every midsized German city, but she doesn't let this stop her. I actually love walking through the markets in Turkey just to enjoy the sights and the smells, but Mother can be relied upon to spoil these pleasures. After just a quarter of an hour, she's pushing four shopping bags into my hands. After another ten minutes I'm lugging at least eight sacks full of oranges, spices, and meat in each hand, and should another half hour pass by, in addition to the numerous bags over each shoulder, I'll be carrying a wreath of garlic around my neck and trying to be as dexterous as possible in the attempt to balance a watermelon on my head.

On this particular evening, there was no end to the appetizers. After the pickled vegetables and the eggplant my mother served us "mücver" (zucchini puffs), "şakşuka" (vegetable ragout), and puff pastry rolls.

I love Turkish appetizers because they look so wonderfully innocent. They're often vegetarian, which is why so many Germans believe that vegetables play a central role in Turkish cuisine. The opposite is the case. I need only recall the headaches I got as a child from eating so much meat. It was my tough luck that I have bad eyes and the optometrist had prescribed glasses for me. My father was firmly convinced that the glasses would soon no longer be necessary if only I would eat enough meat. He didn't pay any attention to vegetables and said at every suitable opportunity: "It's not worth sitting at a table on which there is no meat."

When I was in my mid-twenties I went through a short-lived meatless phase. I lived for eight weeks as a vegetarian. I didn't actually do it because I was convinced it was better, but more because the man I was dating at the time was a vegetarian. I found him really very nice. The only unpleasant thing was how, on our first date, he described for me the agonizing deaths animals suffered. Honestly, at first I didn't understand what he meant. Instead, with a laugh, I countered with the story of the Prophet Ibrahim that my father used to like to tell us before we fell asleep: "One day an angel came to Ibrahim and ordered him to kill his son Ismail. Ibrahim was deeply saddened by Allah's test because he loved his son very much. Nevertheless, he wanted to obey Allah. But the knife became dull and wouldn't cut when he drew it across his son's throat. A voice said to him: "Do not kill your son," and two rams descended from heaven, fighting. Ibrahim had passed the test. Together with his son, he sacrificed both animals, and they shared the meat with friends and with those in need."

Instead of enjoying the story with me, this vegetarian man simply looked disgustedly at the plate that had just been brought to me, on which sat a 250-gram steak from an Argentinean cow, fresh blood oozing out of the crispy brown surface. After a moment of horror, he grabbed my hand and declared to me, almost in tears, how sorry he felt for me because of my blindness. He emphatically and repeatedly assured me that I would be supporting cruelty to animals until I eventually lost my appetite and no longer wanted to touch the dream steak – the steak you almost could've eaten with a spoon.

In order to save myself further situations of this nature, I decided to renounce meat as well. It wasn't all that difficult for me to eat a vegetarian diet because I didn't have the opportunity to take part in my family's meat orgies anyway.

I visited only once during this time. My father was already standing in the garden lighting the barbecue. I cautiously began a father-daughter discussion with him: "Too much meat isn't supposed to be healthy."

"Then don't eat so much."

"You know, it's not supposed to be bad at all to go without meat for a while."

"Says who? Koala bears?"

It suddenly seemed ridiculous to me to confess to my father that I didn't want to eat meat anymore. It happens to me constantly that I do things in one world that I just can't translate into my parallel world, because they're suddenly absurd in these surroundings. It would be like offering my father, standing at his barbecue, a piece of Black Forest cake and a pot of coffee. So I stayed quiet at first and waited to see if an opportunity would arise at the table.

We'd hardly sat down together when my father tossed a rib of lamb onto everyone's plate. I pushed the meat to the side and filled my plate with salad. While I tried to hide the rib under my salad, the rest of my family was occupied using their teeth to tear flesh from bone. My father looked at me and tossed another piece of lamb onto my plate. I took some more salad, hid the second piece of meat underneath and said: "Puh, am I ever full." My father answered: " What? From that little bit?" and tossed another piece over. "I don't want to eat anymore meat," I shouted at him.

"If you're full, your mother will pack up the rest for you to have later."

"I'm never going to eat meat again, I'm a vegetarian," I cried in despair.

Everyone fell silent and stared at me. My brother was the first to laugh out loud, then the others exploded with laughter too. I had to give up, and perhaps I gave up too quickly,

but that's not really it: I simply had no choice. To my father, "I'm a vegetarian" sounds just about as ridiculous as "I'm German."

Thus my life as a vegetarian came to a rude end, the victim of universal ridicule. Even today my father kills himself laughing when he thinks of that day. And when everyone has recovered from their laugh attack, my father calls out from the barbecue: "No meat for Hatice, she's a vegetarian!"

Even when it's two degrees above zero my father sets his barbecue up in the yard. He doesn't care that he has to bundle up and that the neighbors make fun of him behind their curtains. When I point out to him that it would be better for him to use his electric grill and that the weather report just announced snow, he fans his "Hürriyet" newspaper with even more force, generating about as much smoke as a diesel truck in an Istanbul traffic jam.

Last fall I gave him an expensive electric grill so that he could at least move his barbecuing inside during the winter months. It was no use; the whole apparatus has stood unused in the kitchen since then. He prefers to use his beloved, portable, charcoal-burning folding grill, with its three legs that you have to screw onto the brazier before you set it up. This grill is five years old now and as soon as it falls over, rusted through, my father will buy himself a new one for fifteen Euro.

Thirty years ago, when my father sent the first plumes of smoke wafting through his yard in Duisburg, the neighbors looked suspiciously over the fence. "No worry, I grilling," he called over to them. But somehow this truly unsettled them, as it sounded dangerous.

At the time I was proud of my father's barbecuing mania. I found it very archaic and primal the way he would trundle out into the yard in any weather, in any season, because he once again felt a desire for filets of barbecued meat.

Once, before I gave him the electric grill, I brought a grill along with me. It was on sale as part of a special promotion at Esso. It was hip height, had a closable lid, and its chrome legs glistened in the sun. They called it the "Teutonic Grill" and it cost 99.90 Marks. I don't know what was wrong with it, but for months it rusted in the rain while my father continued to set up his old folding grill. I found out later that it was the name he didn't like. "Oh excuse me," I said snappishly, "unfortunately they didn't have an Ottoman Grill."

We hadn't yet finished our appetizers when my mother came in with three different types of kebabs. Kebab simply means "fried" or "sautéed." And if the word "döner" appears in front of it, it means "that which turns."[9] We ate şiş kebab, skewers of fresh lamb that my mother had fried in olive oil. She had skewered pieces of tomato and pepper between the tender chunks of meat. When she came into the living room with the dish, it smelled exquisitely of thyme. My father took it from her and said: "Ah, finally some meat; now I'm in paradise."

Can it be that barbecuing awakens the primal male instinct, regardless of whether it's a Turk or a German doing it? Or how to explain the fact that representatives of the female sex so seldom stand at the grill holding a bottle of beer and flipping slabs of meat by the sweat of their brows? It is always the manliest men who stand by the open fire grilling chicken breasts for the women, or for the boys in their flannel slacks.

At the same time, it was not so long ago that the Germans turned up their noses at the Turkish guest workers who, along with their families, took over the parks in the summer and barbecued with the same composure as they would have, had they found themselves at

an open fire in the Anatolian hinterland. It wasn't long before the German workers and academics got together in front of their arbors and set up a barbecue. Suddenly their wives were swapping marinade recipes, and class differences could be discerned only according to whether the meat had been bought from the trusted family butcher or at the supermarket.

On weekends in the summer, the Tiergarten in Berlin, or to be more precise, the meadow across from the "House of Cultures," located just a couple hundred meters from the Presidential Residence, regularly transforms into a piece of Anatolia. Turkish extended families gather around their respective fires and roast whole animals. This spot became affectionately known to Germans and Turks alike, as the "Turkish Meadow." I like this little piece of home, because here anarchy reigns. Convoys of cars full of Turks drive up transporting the complete furnishings of an apartment in their trunks and on their roof racks. Tables, chairs, arm chairs, sunshades, and, of course, the barbecue. Once there was even a three person sofa on the meadow; the grandma of the family sat dozing and the grandpa sucked on his water pipe beside her. The Turkish camp outside the gates of Vienna must have looked similar.[10]

The "Turkish Meadow" even gave rise to a political demonstration. At the time, a couple of months before an election, CDU representatives tried to drive the Turks and their barbecues out of the Tiergargen.[11] The Green Party showed their solidarity with the Turks and set themselves up in front of the Reichstag with their organic sausages – their rallying cry being that barbecuing is conducive to international understanding.

Supposedly, ex-President Johannes Rau once tried to put through a ban on barbecuing on the Turkish Meadow because the clouds of smoke were wafting into the nearby Bellevue Palace. Monetary fines were to be imposed. Luckily it didn't amount to

anything; hundreds of Turks continued to lay siege to the area. Officially however, barbecuing is allowed only on the grassy expanse between the Straße des 17. Juni and John-Foster-Dulles Allee. But no one keeps to this area, despite the police attempting to enforce the rule. The neighboring meadows are simply taken over. It's not so easy to get rid of the barbecue-crazy picnickers. How did they chase the Turks away from Vienna in the first place?

I must admit that the mountains of garbage, the plastic chairs carelessly tossed away, and the black fire pits over which mutton or lamb were roasted and that are regularly left behind in the park are not a pretty sight. I get angry every time I have to jog a slalom course in the Tiergarten; my countrymen embarrass me, and I curse them. However, as soon as I smell that well-seasoned meat, the aroma drifting through the Garden on a balmy summer evening, I return very quickly to my Turkish heritage – my Turkish roots blossom forth. It is really very difficult to remain German where barbecued meat is concerned. I would much rather benefit from the highlights of both cultures.

I approach the consumption of pork the same way. I don't know a single Turk to whom it ever occurred to eat pork. I would feel free to eat it, but I simply don't enjoy the taste. Years ago I tried roast pork while visiting a friend and her family. After that I got herpes. I tried coarse liverwurst once, and I felt sick to my stomach. To me, pork is a bit like Turkish men: you can, but you don't have to. At the end of the day, the turkey's more tender, the duck is crispier, the lamb is heartier, and the steak is juicier.

My favorite kebab came to the table after I was already full. But I would never have the heart to pass up adana kebab with yogurt. My mother spices the ground lamb, which she

moulds into small oblong sausages and grills on skewers, with sumac. This wine-red spice is extracted from the dried berries of the staghorn sumac tree. In my imagination, Paradise smells like this spice. When the meat is ready, it's prepared with broiled tomatoes and peppers and sautéed cubes of bread in a light yogurt sauce. Finally, everything is garnished with fresh mint leaves.

In the last couple of years, my father's passion for barbecuing has waned a bit. Not that he eats less meat, in fact, quite the opposite: He is firmly convinced that older people must eat more meat in order to live longer. No, my father's desire for meat is in no way dwindling, rather his enthusiasm for setting up and lighting the barbecue.[12] But he is very resourceful. He simply relocates the barbecue to Ablam's yard.

At first, the visits were completely harmless. "I brought you fresh meat," he said happily. Later he set up his folding grill in the yard and said, "I'm giving it to you." Now he continues his barbecue orgies at her place; but my brother-in-law is responsible for lighting the grill. My father sits in a twenty-five-year-old garden bench swing that Ablam found in my parents' basement, pushes himself gently with his foot and gives directions. He assigns the cutting of the meat to Ablam and the preparation of the salad to my two nieces. The privilege of pouring olive oil, lemon, and salt over it, he reserves for himself. "Olive oil from one who is generous, salt from one who is miserly, and lemon from one who is crazy," he says and handles the ingredients with aplomb.

"Oil and salt make sense, but the crazy one, what's his job?" I ask.

"He spreads the lemon juice the best," he answers and waves the lemon wildly as he squeezes it.

I would really rather not eat anything more, but my mother plops a portion of her favorite dish onto my plate. Tencere kebab is a heavily spiced combination of lamb, vegetables, and potato cooked into a hearty stew in a large pot. I'm already so full that I don't notice either that the meat came from the lightly marbled shoulder of the lamb, or that my mother mixed raisins, nuts, and two hundred and fifty grams of butter into the rice that we ate with it. Honestly, I don't taste anything anymore; I just keep chewing until everything in my mouth is mixed and ground to mush. When we were kids, we'd often chew our food to a pulp, and as soon as my mother went into the kitchen we'd open our mouths and mumble to each other: "Check it out – a train wreck." These stories that occur to me seem less appetizing, the fuller I become.

I'm very happy that my father was never so archaic as to want to hunt his own food. Most of the time it was enough for him to cook it over an open fire. When I think about my childhood, I'm not surprised at how calmly and naturally we dealt with the topic of slaughter. When my girlfriends at school told of their romantic visits to the farm, I countered with tales of chickens who, after my mother had cut their heads off, ran another couple laps around the yard before they fell over dead. I was six at the time. When my classmates came back from summer holidays raving about soft sandy beaches or camp fires on the dunes, I told the story of the cow in our Anatolian village whose legs had to be tied together and who had to be held down by twenty men before my father could take a sharp butcher knife and make a giant slash across the underside of its throat where the large arteries and pipes for air and food ran, and let it bleed out. I was ten at the time.

The blood seeped into the ground in our front yard for hours, and I watched fascinated. When the cow was finally dead, my mother and four aunts chopped the animal into countless pieces in order to share the meat with friends, relatives, and with the poor. This is how we celebrated Eid al-Adha – the celebration of the sacrifice – the most important Muslim celebration. Muslim beliefs don't actually forbid the anesthetization of animals. There are, however, very practical reasons why, in our village, they had to bleed to death: the proper technology for a professional anesthetization was lacking. But everyone had a sharp knife at home. The slaughter was carried out as it was in ancient times.

In Germany our celebration of Eid al-Adha wasn't quite so bloody. My father went to a German farmer, selected a lamb, and had it anesthetized as required by law. Then he laid the animal facing Mecca, said the appropriate prayer out of the Koran, and slit its throat. Everything perfectly legal. He packed the lamb into the trunk of his Mercedes and drove happily home. Almost like the German father who cuts down his own tree at Christmas and carries it proudly into the apartment.

My mother hauled the lamb into the basement, dismembered it with a cleaver, and froze the surplus meat. My father immediately took a couple of ribs, along with the liver and the testicles, tossed them onto an already lit barbecue and called us to dinner half an hour later.

In the meantime, we're all about to burst. "Tok iken yemek yiyen, mezarını dişiyle kazır" (He who eats with a full stomach digs his grave with his own teeth), I call to my mother as she disappears into the kitchen. But she just ignores me and doesn't let it deter her from serving dessert – "hanım göbeği." "Lady's navel" is a sticky sweet cookie that consists of

sugar, butter, oil, and eggs. It's thus named because, before the cookies are deep-fried, you use your finger to press a little "belly button" into the balls of dough.

While we serve ourselves, desperately trying to keep up, my mother continues to bring more bowls out of the kitchen and says: "Oh, you haven't eaten anything. Didn't you like it?" She puts honey melon, grapes, apples, and pears on the table. We've already draped ourselves across the sofa, our bellies bulging out in front of us, when she hurries by for the third time in a row and places the inevitable Turkish honey on the table.

Turkish honey is thick, extremely sweet, and pistachios, coconut shavings, nuts, or rosewater are added according to taste. Once a German man brought me Turkish honey on our first date, or rather, what he thought was Turkish honey. He handed me a package of honey still in the honeycomb. Honey in the honeycomb is also a Turkish specialty, it's just not Turkish honey. For those who would like to prepare it themselves, here is my mother's recipe:

With a large wooden spoon she stirs a kilogram of sugar, four hundred grams of honey, and a third of a liter of water together on high heat until the gooey mass in the pot begins to boil. Then she turns the temperature down and allows the goo to simmer for sixty minutes, stirring repeatedly. As a test, she puts a chunk the size of a table-tennis ball in a bowl of ice water and forms it into a sphere with her fingers. When this little bullet becomes buoyant and clear, the mixture is perfect. She takes the pot off the stove, beats four egg whites until they're firm, pours in the hot sugary mass, and continues to stir until it becomes even thicker. She then lightly roasts one hundred sixty grams of nuts – hazelnuts, almonds, or pistachios, whichever she chooses – in a pan, chops them up, and mixes them in. Still warm, this exquisite candy is then scraped from the edge of the pot.

Finally she sprinkles a square cake pan with oil, spreads the entire mass into the pan, and lets it dry overnight at room temperature. The next morning, she cuts the Turkish honey into squares with a sharp blade, wraps the pieces in foil, and stores them in a tightly sealed container. You really don't want to know how many calories there are in even one piece of Turkish honey!

"Let us eat sweet, and let us speak sweet," my mother calls from the kitchen and adds, as we'd feared, tea, mocha, roasted pistachios, and sunflower seeds to the Turkish honey. Now we must praise my mother. Among Turks one does this by saying the following: "Anneciğim çok harika, eline sağlık, tek kuş sütü eksikti." Translated it means: "Dearest mother, that was marvelous; Allah protect your hands. The only thing missing was bird's milk."

Although such feasts, understood as a matter of course with my mother and all other Turks, take place in the middle of Germany, most Germans don't notice any of it. When it comes to Turkish food, most of them just think of döner, the "gyro," a torpedo of meat that a migrant worker invented just for them twenty-five years ago. My brother Mustafa, however, tells a completely different tale of the döner's development: "Hey, you know, how was döner invente? Someone had tharow hand garenade ona herd of sheep."

I really like to eat at my "Turk just around the corner." For Germans his store is the döner joint; for me it's my "kebapcı." Mesut, who mans the grill, is so pleased when I order a dürüm, a lahmacun, or an adana kebab from him, and I'm the first customer of the day for whom he doesn't have to make a "döner with everything and hot sauce."

If the Germans only knew exactly what and how many calories are in a basic two Euro döner, they would very quickly switch to Lahmacun, the Turkish ground beef pizza. Cheap döner never made anyone look good. A little tip: If a lot of crumbly meat falls off when the döner is cut, it consists for the most part of indefinable, thrown together, fatty meat – the meat scraps stuffed in as filler because they could not be formed into the leaner slabs of meat that should actually be used in making döner. The finest specimen of a döner has a maximum of twenty percent fat and when the meat is added to the pita bread, then at least half of the filling should consist of vegetables.

According to Mesut, for the configuration of a top-notch döner spit for the whole family you do the following: From two kilograms of veal or lamb, six hundred grams are made into ground meat. The larger portion of the meat is freed of sinew and carved into extremely thin slices with a very sharp knife. These slices, or filets, are left overnight in a marinade of onion juice, pepper, salt, and oil.

On the next day you thread the slices close together onto a spit, fill the spaces in between with the good – because there's not much of it – ground meat, so that the individual pieces bake together to form one big chunk as it rotates and roasts. Before you begin with the grilling, you must cut off the pieces of meat sticking out and string these back on top. The spit is painted with onion juice, formed into a turnip shape, so that it's easier to cut the meat off from top to bottom afterwards, and fixed upright in front of the glowing grill. Now the döner spit has to turn slowly.

In Turkey döner kebab is served on a plate, never in a pita. Pita is food for fasting. It's baked and eaten only during the fast. Whenever there's meat in bread, then it's wrapped in thin baked dürüm, the fine sheets of yeast dough. Döner is also never eaten with garlic in

Turkey, at most with yogurt sauce. And if there are vegetables, then grilled tomatoes and hot peppers. Who's idea was it in the first place to pack red cabbage, white cabbage, cucumber, and feta cheese onto a döner? And who committed the crime of garlic sauce that consists of up to fifty percent mayonnaise?

My mother isn't the only one who likes to cook for her guests, be they family or be they strangers. Turkish hospitality is well known everywhere. It's written in every travel guide that one must never scorn it. A Turkish host offers up dishes that make the table sag. Even the poorest Turk wants to honor his guest, regardless of whether he or she comes from Germany or Turkey, or if it's one's own children. You'll be fattened up without fail. Turkish hospitality demands that the guest just about explodes, otherwise he or she didn't enjoy the food. It would never occur to a Turk to fend off food, because this would count as an insult.

But it's also a question of honor for the host. Even greater than the Turks' fear of diet products is their fear that the neighbors might speak ill of them because one cannot eat their fill at their table. "If you all don't eat, you'll see my dead body," my mother often says as a last threat when we don't want to take any more food. "You come as a stranger and leave as a friend!" is another of our sayings when it comes to the legendary Turkish hospitality. Incidentally, Turks don't expect Germans to be familiar with all the particulars of Turkish culture. One can simply behave as usual. Don't worry, we only ever say bad things about our guests after they've left, like: "Unbelievable how much they ate! We almost didn't manage to fill them up!"

4. Journey into the Land of Mothers

When my mother sews cash into her undershirt and loads up marmalade jars, shirts, stockings, chocolate, Nescafé, shampoo bottles, Nivea cream, and the ten-piece pot set, when my father has balanced suitcases, travel bags, the television, and the feather-down mattress on the roof rack of the car, tying everything down with carpet tape and wash line to keep it from slipping, when the Milupa powdered baby formula, presents from the relatives in Germany for the relatives in Turkey, and travel provisions for four days have been stowed away, and my tired siblings and I have been packed into the back seat at the crack of dawn, when the inside and the outside of the Mercedes has been filled to its carrying capacity, then summer holidays have arrived. It's once again time for the family holiday in Anatolia.

The words "summer holidays" didn't sound like "time off school" or "trip to the ocean" to me. They sounded like my sisters' bony elbows boring into my ribs, like my mother's slaps, like the terrible images of traffic accidents with disemboweled cars and lifeless bodies on the highway, and, at some point, after a seemingly endless 3500 km, like the buzz of relatives in our native village. Like almost all migrant-worker families, my parents also made the rough, dangerous, and dusty voyage by car and thus assumed all the attendant troubles. While my girlfriends raved about the North Sea and other holiday destinations, I simply wondered if I'd come back from my trip alive. On the last day of

school I often said farewell to my friends with the words: "Take care, it was nice knowing you."

Every year numerous families lost their lives on the Highway of Death, as we called the route from Duisburg all the way to our Anatolian village Akpınar Köyü. The drivers focused single-mindedly on their goal, but on such a long trip, the concentration inevitably waned. The appearance of sudden obstacles caught them off guard. Many were too tired to react fast enough. None of this deterred my father.

Or perhaps it would be better to say that he had no other choice. A flight would have cost just under 1000 DM for the adults and 300 DM per child, and for a six – and later eight – person family like ours, that was far too expensive. Gas, a letter guaranteeing assistance from ADAC,[13] and customs duty for the television came to just 500 DM, plus the 100 DM one was forced to exchange in Bulgaria. And then there were still Marlboros, cans of Coca-Cola, cigarette lighters, and pens for the traffic police. All in all, that was much easier to get over.

When the opportunity arose, we drove in a caravan with two other Turkish families so that we could provide mutual protection against attack. On the way we met fellow travelers who told stories of being robbed blind during the night at deserted rest stops in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. That almost happened once to a relative of ours. He had locked the car from the inside, but the burglar tried to break through the windshield. Awakened by the noise, he immediately started the car and squealed away.

As soon as we arrived in our Turkish village, the fathers sat down together to tea and a water pipe and told all the relatives how they had chased away criminals and effortlessly

conquered the distance. But it was a long way to that point. It took four days and three nights and we drove through Austria, the former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Turkey.

Before my father put the key into the ignition on the morning of our departure in Duisburg, he raised his arms in the car to pray. We followed suit and listened to him, to the way he recited the Sura El-Fatiha from the Koran:[14]

Bismillâhir-rahmânir-rahîm.

In the name of Allah the merciful, the compassionate.

Elhamdu lillâhi Rabbil 'âlemîn.

Praise be to Allah, Lord of all that inhabits the Earth.

Errahmânir- rahîm.

The merciful, the compassionate.

Mâliki yevmid-din.

The Lord on the Day of Judgement.

Îyâke na'budu ve îyâke neste'în.

We pray to you, and we beseech you to help us.

Ihdinas-sirâtal-musteqîm.

Guide us upon the right path.

Sirâtallezîne en'amte 'aleyhim

The path of those to whom you are merciful,

ghayril-magdûbi aleyhim

not that of those who have provoked your wrath,

ve led-dââllîn

and not the path of those who go astray.

Together we murmured "Amin" at the end.

The last we saw of Duisburg at dawn were the blast furnaces, which towered over the city – the tall smokestacks, the tips of which jabbed into the blood-red sky. The sun was just beginning to rise. Right around Cologne my three sisters and I had determined the most comfortable arrangement in the back seat. Although "comfortable" was a euphemism, it was more a question of us four agreeing upon the least of all possible evils.

We half sat and half sprawled, in a jumble of arms and legs, and, in order not to topple over onto one another, we angled our upper bodies and leaned against each other. Sometimes one of us crouched in the foot space in front of the passenger seat and rested her head on our mother's lap. This place was particularly sought-after because it meant not only that one was closer to the food, which my Mother retrieved from the trunk and rationed out among us, but above all because down there one had a break from her sisters.

After the birth of my first brother Mehmet we would actually have needed a bigger car: father, mother, and five children were just too many – even for a Mercedes. But because my father would never have traded his Benz for any other car, one of us was allowed to fly to Istanbul, where she was picked up by relatives and brought to the village. Before my father went to buy the ticket we had to determine who was allowed to fly. In order to do this my father took a yard stick and measured our legs. The daughter with the longest legs won the flight.

Ablam had the longest legs the first year; the next year it was my younger sister Fatma, but Ablam quickly adapted herself to the new situation and argued that, in the interest of saving space, the length of one's legs should not be the decisive factor, but rather the

width of one's behind. During puberty I grew a lot more in width than I did in height, so in this contest I had a good chance against Ablam, but no degree of teenage disproportion would have earned me that flight. Regardless of how much space I took up, my father wanted to have me with him in the car. As a child Ablam was too shy, my two younger sisters were too young. Over the course of the trip I had to translate, fill out forms at the borders, and deal with the customs officials.

Really sleeping was out of the question for the entire journey. The childish excitement had evaporated long ago and become fatigue. I dozed with my head lolling to the side and my eyes closed; only my nose and my ears took in my surroundings. Droning trucks that my father overtook, whirring motorcycles that flew by us, the sharp smell of manure on the fields, the dull, distorted voices of my family in the car, and the rustling of bags when my mother dug out the pita bread, tomatoes, feta cheese, olives, and roasted chicken.

We took our first break at a rest stop near Munich. We climbed out of the car with ashen faces, sleepy eyes, and an unpleasant taste in our mouths. My mother had already spread a blanket across the hood of the car and lit the flame under the tiny camping stove to cook water for tea. We waited by the car for my father, who was washing himself in preparation for prayer. After the ritual cleansing, he took his prayer rug from the rear shelf of the car, rolled it out on a clean piece of ground, turned his face in the direction of Mecca, and prayed. In Central Europe the direction of prayer is approximately south south-east, but my father didn't need a compass to determine the exact direction. I asked him once, how he could manage to ascertain it so precisely, and he answered: "A Muslim knows."

Other believers at the rest stop obviously didn't know quite so exactly; indeed, they used compasses to aid themselves. Until this day my father can decipher the correct direction

of prayer without any assistance from the ever more modern devices available. One of my parents' neighbors even owns a cell phone that, with the help of the satellite navigation system, can determine the exact direction to Mecca completely independent of the sun's position or the correspondingly oriented prayer alcove in a mosque.

My father raised his hands to his ears and began his prayer with the proclamation:

Allâhu ekber

Allah is great. (Four times)

Eschhedu el lâ ilâhe illallâh

I bear witness that there is no God but Allah. (Twice)

Eschedu enne Muhammeder-rasûlullâh

I bear witness that Mohammed is the messenger of Allah. (Twice)

Haye 'ales-salâh

Let us pray! (Twice)

Haye 'alel-felâh

Let us worship! (Twice)

Allâhu ekber

Allah is great. (Twice)

Lâ ilâhe illallâh

There is no God but Allah. (Once)

My father taught us the most important Sura in the Koran himself. Later we learned to read the entire Koran in Koran school. I don't pray anymore, I haven't for a long time, and the last time I read the Koran was a few years ago when I read a German translation. But I have never forgotten the Sura my father taught me, and if I wanted to I could recite them by

heart at any time. Only sometimes, when I want something very very badly, do I kneel on a hand towel, cover my hair with my Pashmina scarf, and recite the Sura El-Fatiha. It is the opening Sura in the Koran and begins with the name of Allah, whose mercy and grace is briefly described.

When my father had finished his prayer, he rolled up his prayer rug and stowed it back in the car. Throughout the whole long drive to Turkey, my father stopped only to find a place to sleep, or when it was time to pray. A religious Muslim normally prays five times a day. In the morning, at noon, in the afternoon, at sunset, and in the late evening. However, exceptions are made for travelers, the specifics of which can be found in the Koran. So, while my father was not allowed to shorten the five mandatory prayers, he was allowed to consolidate them into three sessions. For us, that meant that the rest stops were even more seldom.

In Austria we stopped in small, clean villages, bought rolls, and drank cacao. The people wore strange costumes and spoke a German I couldn't understand. They were no less strange to us than we were to them, but we didn't feel at all uneasy. Out the car windows we saw gently rolling hills, intensely verdant meadows, and spotted cows drift by. We drove from Salzburg through Linz to Graz. By the first night, we had most of Austria behind us.

Things first started to seem foreign after we crossed the border into Yugoslavia. Driving over the border marked our entry into purgatory. From here on, we ate only the provisions my mother had packed. There were, of course, restaurants and inns where my father would have been able to stop. But the food was uneatable and overly expensive, and the people who prowled around the car when we stopped seemed sinister to us.

In comparison to that of Germany and Austria, the landscape was desiccated, empty, and bleak. Only once in a while did the beautiful white mountain tops glisten in the sun. We often drove for hours without seeing a single tree or bush. There were cars ready for the scrap heap and rusted-out trucks scattered all over the roadsides.

We snaked through the heat along curving roads; the monotony was broken only by the rattle of the old diesel trucks that my father overtook. We'd already left behind countless signs bearing the names of cities, and scores more still lay ahead of us. We wobbled and swayed from Ljubljana, Zagreb, Split, Belgrad, to Nis on endless country roads in the Southeast. Sometimes the nights were so clear that I spent hours counting the stars in the sky. The longer we drove through the country, however, the grayer our car windows became. And when, after hours of driving, we opened the car doors at a rest stop, a dusty wind blasted us in the face. The air was thick, but we breathed deeply.

We climbed out and stretched our limbs. The smell of food had mingled with the effluvium from the sewer system. We ran to the rudimentary toilets, the wind raised the dust in gusts and swirls, and stones crunched under our feet. We never stopped for very long in this strange world. We wanted to quickly leave the sparse landscape and its unapproachable people behind us.

As we drove on, I was reminded of the movie "Der Schatz im Silbersee," which I had once seen on television. I knew that Winnetou and Old Shatterhand were riding through Yugoslavia in the movie. But the Yugoslavia that we saw from the car had no magnificent landscapes and mountain scenery. We never passed by the blooming fields and rippling brooks.

Although it was mild outside, we froze at night. I listened to the wind whistling through the cracks and crannies around the car windows and silently counted how many hours it would take us to reach the fountain with the clear water in our home village.

After purgatory came the real hell – Bulgaria. Anyone who didn't have a sufficient supply of Marlboros, chocolate, and Coca-Cola, who didn't know exactly how to inconspicuously bribe the Bulgarian customs officials, wasted many hours at the border for no reason. "Komşu" (neighbor), they called into the car, "do you have anything to declare?" Not just a "no" in answer, but a carton of cigarettes along with it, would open the border.

My father would have preferred to drive straight through Bulgaria. He stopped only briefly, when we were in very urgent need of a bathroom break. As soon as he realized that a stop was unavoidable, he started fuming and ordered us to hurry and to come directly back to the car – no dawdling. His foul mood infected us all. When we drove through Bulgaria, the atmosphere in the car was tense. We spoke only when absolutely necessary and stared fixedly out the windows as we drove through areas overgrown with weeds and along deserted streets, on which we seldom saw other people. Most of the villages we passed through were something between a ghost town and a slum.

My father also detested the chicaneries of the Bulgarian police who waved him over to the side of the road every hundred kilometers. He didn't know why they did this, but he also never asked what their reason was. It would have, without a doubt, significantly delayed our progress. As soon as we had to stop, my sisters and I pulled the blanket over our heads and pretended to be asleep. My father rolled down the window and gave the men a taste of Western life: cigarettes, cigarette lighters, and Coca-Cola.

Two days later we reached "Kapıkule," the Turkish border crossing. Shortly before the border we awoke out of our lethargy and wiggled excitedly in our seats. Between the Bulgarian and Turkish borders drivers had to pass through deep puddles deliberately put there by customs officers so that no tire carried a single grain of Bulgarian soil into Turkey.

The Turkish officers had placed a large placard above the customs booth. White writing on a red background read: "ne mutlu türküm diyene" (happy is he, who may call himself Turkish), and the letters shone through the dust. The Turkish border officials sat comfortably in their little booths and greeted us cordially. As we drove past the border post, the officer smiled at us, counted the children in the backseat, and said delightedly: "Four daughters?" And my father answered proudly. Yes, four beautiful daughters. We drove past screaming children, praying men, and laughing women. For the first time since Duisburg, we were wide awake again.

My father stopped the car, we climbed out, stretched, and rubbed our puffy eyes. When we set out in Germany, I left my home. But now, after three days, my surroundings felt familiar again, and I was overcome by a renewed feeling of home, the same feeling I experienced when we drove out of Duisburg.

In terms of landscape, the part of Turkey that now followed didn't look that different from Bulgaria, but for us it was as different as day and night. We finally saw people again and could observe the bustle and trade on the streets. The eight hundred kilometers that we had yet to put behind us seemed endless, but we were filled with the magical certainty that we were once more secure in our homeland's embrace. We had to spend the night one more time before we reached our destination, but this time my father wasn't worried. He slept outside in front of the car; my mother slept with us in the Mercedes. On this night, the most

sought after place was the driver's seat, even though we couldn't lean it back because there were still six legs jumbled about in the backseat. We decided who got this spot with the game paper, rock, scissors. I usually balled my hand into a fist, while my brother stretched his out flat, or I had paper, while one of my sisters indicated scissors. I lost, but it didn't matter, because this night was short. We started driving again at 3:30 the next morning.

On these long trips to Turkey I developed an insurmountable aversion to long journeys, especially when I have to make them in the car. I refuse to set foot in a car if I'm to be driving for more than sixty minutes, and all the more so if I have to sit in the back. After a half hour I start to get impatient – even in the passenger's seat – after forty-five minutes, belligerent, and by the time we arrive, I've insulted each of my traveling companions multiple times. I hate car trips. And therefore I don't own a car. Only once did I drive a rental car from Berlin to Duisburg, but then only because I'd given my niece a drive in a convertible for her sixteenth birthday.

If any journey takes longer than one hour, I take the train; if a train ride takes longer than two hours, I book a flight. If the route from the airport to my destination takes longer than an hour, I take the train. Should the train ride from the airport to my final destination take more than two hours, I book a connecting flight. I also apply this formula in reverse. If I require less than fifteen minutes to travel somewhere with the subway or suburban train, I ride my bike; if it takes less then five minutes by bike, I walk. And should a journey take less than five minutes by foot, then, according to this pattern, I would actually have to stay at home and not move at all. But that doesn't happen very often.

During the long eight-hundred kilometers from the Turkish border to our native village of Akpınar Köyü we drove past wheat fields in which young women were working and men were driving tractors; we saw old women selling vegetables in the heat and children who ran after our car waving. My father stopped for the last time right before the village. He always stopped at the same watering hole. Here we had to wash and change our clothes.

I let clear, cold water run over my sleepy face, exchanged my beloved jeans for a long, clean skirt, and fastened my head scarf with two knots under my chin. My thoughts wandered back to Duisburg; I thought of my girlfriends, who by now were surely playing on a beach somewhere, of my Wrangler's, which I wouldn't wear now for five weeks, and I thought of the fact that my other life was now more than 3500 kilometers away from this particular spot.

Our village lay quietly somewhere between no-man's-land and homeland; it was a place between familiarity and strangeness. In the next weeks I would live in the house in which I was born, look into faces that were strange to me, but somehow similar to those of my parents, allow myself to be hugged and kissed by strangers, and sit for hours in foreign kitchens, the smells of which I knew all too well. I would feel homesickness for Germany in the next weeks, but at the same time wouldn't want to leave here. I was in agreement with everything without knowing what this agreement was actually based on.

In the village we played in my grandfather's wheat fields and herded his sheep in the pasture. Sometimes he took us with him in the horse-drawn cart to Çavdarhisar, the next biggest town. The market took place here. Farmers drove their tractors from all throughout the surrounding area and offered mountains of cabbage, leeks, eggplant, potatoes, and tomatoes for sale. Others sold live hens and sheep, yogurt, feta cheese, olives, and tomato

paste by the bucketful, or pickled vegetables. Young boys carrying tea on silver trays wove their way through the narrow alleys and delighted buyers and sellers alike with "çay," the sweet Turkish tea. Pistachios, hazelnuts, olives, sunflower-, and pumpkin seeds stood around in sacks, and men scooped cheese and brightly colored spices into shopping bags. On the side of the road men stood selling oven fresh sesame rings and filled pastries from rickety wooden trolleys. Or, as a quick snack, "kokoreç," the grilled intestines of a cow.

The market was a strange, daunting world full of unfamiliar smells and sounds. The vendors sat on the ground or on wobbly chairs and vociferously promoted their wares. Fascinated, I observed them as they bartered, discussed, and weighed products and decisions. Their cigarettes never fell from the corners of their mouths when they spoke. Others sucked pleasurably on their nargile, or water pipe, or drank black tea. Almost exclusively women ran about in the back section of the bazaar. They clattered around with silver bowls, colorful plastic dishes, grabbed at carpets and material, and clamped the ends of their long robes between their knees when they bent down.

I did feel like a stranger in this world, but it fascinated me nonetheless. I had a peculiar feeling, because this strangeness that I sensed really existed only in my head. The people in the market didn't notice that I didn't belong to them; after all, with my clothing, I looked just like them, and I understood what they said. Later I would travel a great deal and visit many different markets, but every time it would be different. Although I was also a stranger here in Anatolia, I sensed a great closeness. It wasn't my world, but we shared the same language.

My father once accompanied us to Çavdarhisar. When we arrived at the market, I suddenly noticed that he was trembling. He stood upright, he didn't move, but his entire

body shook. In my family, my father is the hero. He had sold his herd of sheep and used the money to move to Germany, had later brought his family to a new country and become a miner without ever having worked underground before. Since then, he enjoyed living in Germany, but once a year his longing compelled him to return to Turkey. Then he drove, with wife and children, the 3500 kilometers to his home village without his daughters, his family, or even his Mercedes once suffering so much as a scratch. And suddenly he stood in the market in Çavdarhisar and trembled.

I have often asked him what happened that morning. He told me only years later when we were in his car on the way to my sister's house and were actually due for a father-daughter discussion about my single life.

Before he married my mother, my father loved a girl named Hamide. She was the daughter of the richest man in the village and stunningly beautiful. My father and Hamide were secret lovers because my father didn't fit the description of a suitor of whom her father would have approved. Hamide was supposed to marry a wealthy man from the neighboring village. My father and his beloved had only one chance: he had to abduct her with her consent. On the night before this was to take place, they arranged to meet one last time in the barn to discuss their escape.

But nothing went as planned. Hamide appeared, but she was wearing the gold of another man around her neck and on her arms. She had come only to tell my father that that afternoon she had been promised to another man and would marry him. My father looked at her aghast, grabbed at the gold around her neck, and threw her into the hay. One year later he married my mother.

For twenty years he hadn't seen Hamide, until this morning in the market in Çavdarhisar. Suddenly she stood before him and looked at him with her beautiful eyes. All at once my father was thrown back to a time when they still loved one another. For a moment he was deeply moved, but he quickly found his way back to the present. He took my hand and we continued to walk, because for him it was clear that Hamide was a part of his past and now he had a family.

Even when we didn't drive to the market, we spent the entire day outside. The village was small; nothing could happen to us here. We were allowed to play undisturbed for as long as we wanted. In the evenings we crouched in the glow of a dim petroleum lamp in my grandmother's old clay house and listened to her stories about the village and our family. How, as a young boy, my father used my grandfather's foot as a stirrup to climb up onto a horse. And about how my grandfather rode through the village, stopped at the gate of his rival for the hand of a beautiful girl, and, with a loaded pistol, challenged his adversary to a duel. Grandmother told stories with a bittersweet tone to her voice. Her stories told of love and death; they were beautiful and bloody, sad and joyful. They were tales from a fairy-tale land, and my ancestors were the heroes.

Anadolu (Anatolia) means "abundant with mothers" in Turkish. Our journey every summer was a journey to the land of mothers. The Anatolian village constitutes a fundamental part of my childhood. It is my parents' home, the place I was born, and it occupies an immovable place in my heart. Our trips to Turkey have changed my German character, and life in Germany has strengthened my Turkish side. It always took a couple of days for me to find my bearings in Turkey. And it was difficult for me to put aside my

Turkishness in Germany. Even today I often travel to our Anatolian village and will continue to do so in the future, but I always have my return ticket with me.

On the day of our departure, when the holidays were over, the whole village was in a tizzy. Relatives packed up food for us and sobbed their farewells. They stood at the end of the village, where the gravel road became highway, and waved to us for a long time as we drove away.

The drive back to Duisburg proceeded in much the same manner as the trip from Duisburg: familiar Turkey, menacing Bulgaria, inhospitable Yugoslavia. But after crossing the Austrian border, everything was abruptly different. We were back in civilization. After the customs official had waved our car through, my father stopped in front of a hotel and booked a room. In the evening we were allowed to order chicken and fries in the restaurant. What a feast! Although my father didn't eat any of the chicken, he watched us happily as we ate. Back in clean, rich, central Europe, and he and his family belonged there. At night we slept all together in the double bed. It would never have occurred to my father to book a single room for us. He wanted to have us all with him. I shall never forget the scent of the meadows wafting through the window, the morning dew sparkling in the grass. We continued driving only after we'd eaten breakfast.

Our first glimpse of Duisburg as we neared the city was, as always, the blast furnaces, the many towering chimneys, their white smoke drifting skywards. The smokestacks seemed to rise over the city even more majestically than they did when we departed. I felt warmth and fondness and also relief when I took in this view. We had survived the journey into our other world. My father stopped the car, I climbed out and ran to buy rolls for breakfast.

Our stays in the village have melted into a single nostalgic feeling in my memory. I could always quickly relate the individual happenings to my girlfriends in Germany. There were colorful episodes with funny endings, but after the stories had been told, I was left with an empty feeling. The actual story was the journey itself. The long drives and the varying emotions that I experienced along the way. To this day they are engraved deep in my memory. I could travel back to our village at any time, if I chose to, but never again in my father's Mercedes, never again pestered by my mother's meticulously thought-out preparations for the trip, never again with the bony elbows of my pubescent sisters in my ribs, and never again haunted by nightmarish fears.

My father told me a couple of weeks ago that our old route hasn't been driven much since the war in what used to be Yugoslavia. However, there is still the northern route through Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria into Turkey, and the southern route through Germany, Austria, Italy and then with the ferry from Venice over to Turkey, but very few people drive home anymore. The mattresses and refrigerators have also long ago disappeared from the roofs of cars. But, the packrat mentality of Turks hasn't changed. Now they stand at the airport with travel bags wound round with carpet tape and blue checkered suitcases from the export store tied shut with rope. The baggage carts cause traffic jams; little children in white socks sit enthroned on mountains of luggage. Many travelers run around nervously, quickly trying to find someone upon whom they can foist a portion of their excess baggage. And when the Turkish Airlines flight to Izmir is called, to Adana or Istanbul, then the scramble begins in earnest.

My parents flew to Turkey last summer and enjoyed their first holiday in a five-star hotel. Their image of Turkey has changed. They used to drive home to visit their parents, they took care of the fields or repaired their house. At that time my father would pack all the school-aged children into his Mercedes, drive to the next small city, and fit them all out with new clothes from head to foot. Anyone without a school uniform was not allowed to go to school.

But since then my grandparents have died, the fields have been sold, and our old house hasn't been inhabitable for a long time. My father would never admit it, but basically, over the course of the years, his homeland has become his holiday destination. The fact that he's been retired for a while now and that he and his wife have multiple grandchildren in Germany doesn't change anything; after more than thirty years, he still regularly announces that, next year, he'll return to Turkey for good. When I point out to him that he's been saying that ever since I can remember, he gets angry and hisses at me: "Your mother and I know where we want to be buried; we carry our home here," and points to his heart. A Turkish saying goes: "Neren ağrırsa canın orda" – There, where it hurts, there's your heart.

5. Duisburg, I'm Stuck on You

I grew up in Duisburg. Even today I experience a feeling of home when I think about the city. Since May, my football fan's heart also beats again for Duisburg, because, after five years, the "Zebras" are back in the German Professional Football League.

Many of my friends don't like Duisburg, even though they've never been there. When I rave about the romanticism of the Ruhr Valley, they think of belching smokestacks, foul-smelling exhaust fumes, and bleak row houses in a dirty, uniform grey. And no wonder: Duisburg is a city that, thanks to the expository journalism of Günther Wallraff[15] and the morbid stories in the TV crime scene dramas featuring Horst Schimanski, has not always been portrayed in the best light. It is a working-class city that has been known for high unemployment, crime among migrants, and ghettoization for as long as I can remember. Constantly shabby, rotten, and strewn with garbage, if it were a question of show-casing a run-down city, Duisburg would be the setting of choice.

The house where I grew up wasn't far from the "Crime Scene" filming locations, Duisburg-Marxloh. As children we looked on as the cameras were set up and Schimanski took off in hot pursuit of some criminal element. It was a strange feeling to know that the famous commissioner's apartment was only a few streets away. After school we went to "Peter Pomm's Pusztetten Bude," a restaurant where Schimmi often ate, and we ordered "Pommes rot-weiß."[16]

Tourists only rarely lost their way and ended up in Duisburg-Marxloh. In the 50s, this district was called "Little America" because of the many furriers located there. But that was a long time ago; now it's called "Little Istanbul," but these days I'm not sure which distinction carries the more unpleasant connotation. At the same time, Duisburg is very beautiful. Anyone who thinks poorly of the city just doesn't know it. There's a place on the A 42 highway where I always have to stop, or at least slow down. From there one has an impressive view of the Thyssen skyline; the silhouettes of the blast furnaces rise sharply outlined against the red evening sky. Anyone who has seen this even once is overwhelmed by the bizarre beauty of it and knows what I mean. I've marveled at many wonders of the world – the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, and the fjords of Norway – but nowhere is my heart so moved as at this spot on the A 42.[17]

And yet I was born in the tiny village Akpınar Köyü in Anatolia, the destination of my yearly summer journeys. Akpınar Köyü means "village of the pure source," and to this day women still use pitchers to fetch the clear water from the fountain. It would be the perfect place for all the stressed managers suffering from burnout syndrome – billions of kilometers away from globalization, hostile takeovers, and edgy shareholders.

One spring day, a good thirty years ago, a man came to this village and told of work in another country. My father, a third generation shepherd, didn't deliberate for long; on instinct he left and followed the call. And he did so with no certainty whatsoever as to where it would lead him. My father left our village on the day I was born. He named me after his mother, who had passed away, and then climbed into the bus that was to take him to Istanbul. From there he continued on to Germany by train. In Duisburg he found a position as a miner with Ruhrkohle.[18] He did not return until three years later, and then he came with

plane tickets tucked into his shirt pocket, and he took his family back with him, my mother, my big sister, and me.

Anyone who grows up in the Ruhr Valley doesn't smell burning coal just when he or she leaves the house. There was also a coal-burning stove in our mining company house in Duisburg. Every year my father received two tons of coal delivered free of charge, and he saw no reason to have a central heating system installed. Ruhrkohle brought the coal in a truck to the entrance to our yard, and in order to get it all into the basement my siblings and I had to carry the oval, egg-sized lumps to the basement window in buckets. There my father had built a sort of wooden slide on which the coal tumbled through the window and down into the basement.

Ablam filled the buckets because she was supposedly too weak to carry them, and the rest of the family lugged the coal to the slide and poured it down. After ten minutes our clothes were colored black; after another ten minutes we looked like we'd come out of the mine ourselves. I complained to my father and accused him of forcing me into child labor. But my father only answered: "When we're done here, I'll be happy to drive you to the child welfare office."

But our coal oven had advantages as well. In winter we roasted chestnuts on it, we toasted fresh bread, and in the evenings my father always put on a pot of milk, which we drank hot in the mornings before we went to school. The whole house smelled wonderful when the scent of bread mingled with that of the fire and wafted through the house. When my brothers and sisters and I had had enough of playing outside in the snow, we came into the house and held our ice cold feet and rosy faces in front of the roaring oven. We warmed ourselves before the open flames and enjoyed the heat on our glowing cheeks.

My father had become very religious in Germany and went to the mosque daily. From the time we were ten, my siblings and I accompanied him so we could learn the Koran. My mother rarely came with us – only on the major days of celebration; otherwise she prayed at home. Friday was the most important day in my father's life, because that's when he went to Friday prayer. It occupies a special place because, contrary to the five daily prayers, it cannot be performed just anywhere. "Cuma namazı" is a prayer that must be completed collectively within the community. Only male Muslims are obliged to do this, so after puberty my brothers accompanied my father.

The reason why Muslims must come to the mosque for Friday prayer is to hear the sermon delivered by the clergyman, the hoca.[19] He reminds the Muslim of his duties to Allah and to mankind, and the code of behavior is proclaimed to the faithful. We all went to the mosque together for big celebrations like Eid al-Adha. Then the main room of the mosque was divided by a curtain. My father and brothers sat on one side, and my mother sat with my sisters and me on the other.

I remember the pervasive odor of dirty socks, sweaty feet, and stuffy kitchens that greeted us promptly at the entrance. Here were piled the shoes of the faithful; many were soaked through from rain or snow and so faded that one could only guess at their original color. They were battered and spotted with mildew. Turks take off their shoes at the door of every house, so that the dirt from the street stays outside. It's actually a sensible idea, but sometimes I wonder if socks too should have to conform to these higher standards of hygiene?

It was nice and warm inside, there were also numerous coal-burning stoves here, and the floor of the prayer room was completely covered with carpets. The sumptuous floor coverings were colorfully patterned and so fluffy that my feet sank into them. It was unpleasant only during the prayers because, at this time, not only my toes, knees, and the palms of my hands had to touch the floor, but also my forehead, so that I could smell the feet of the woman in front of me.

When I was ten years old I went to a church for the first time with the family of one of my German girlfriends, and I was astonished that we had to sit on hard wooden benches. It did, of course, smell better than it did in our house of worship, but I found it bitterly cold, and it wasn't even winter.

Sometimes I got bored in the mosque during the hoca's sermon and counted the different patterns on the carpets or stared until I was blurry-eyed at the squiggly verses from the Koran that hung in golden frames on the walls. If I was lucky I got hold of a "tesbih," a prayer chain composed of ninety-nine colored beads, many of which hung on stands along the walls. According to the prayer, I let it slide through my fingers, murmuring "Subhanallah" (Allah be praised) thirty-three times, "Elhamdulillah" (all thanks are owed to Allah) thirty-three times, and "Allahu Ekbar" (Allah is great) thirty-three times. But sometimes I played with the beads, thinking to myself "he loves me, he loves me not."

It was impossible for me to engage in religious contemplation or to find inner peace through prayer and visits to the mosque. I was still too young for all that. I had already mastered most of the Suras, but because I didn't understand the Arabic words, I couldn't do much with them. I learned the Arabic alphabet, put the letters together one after the other, and spoke words that made no sense to me. My parents wanted it that way because they saw

it as a Muslim's duty. I once asked my father why I had to read Suras that I didn't understand. He got very angry and answered: "You don't need to understand them; Allah understands them." After that I never asked him again.

Other than the Koran and my father's Islamic tear-away calendar, there was hardly anything to read at home. At school I'd learned to read and write German, and I was curious what other books there were out there. Once a week a book bus from the city library stopped on our street. As soon as my father had gone to the mosque, I snuck into the bus and took out as many books as I could carry. At home I hid them under my bed and when it got to be evening and we were actually supposed to be asleep – my father had to get up at five o'clock in the morning and luckily always went to bed very early – I pulled out my flashlight and read secretly under the covers. Grimm's fairy tales were my favorite to read, the stories of Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, the princess and the pea, or of Snow White and Rose Red. I couldn't get enough of them. But I also devoured the books about Hanni and Nanni, the Five Friends, and other adventure stories.

My siblings often laughed at me when they caught me as I chewed my way, page by page, through my books. They thought I was crazy because I preferred to read rather than to play with them or to watch television. Maybe that's also the reason why, to this day, they all speak a more colloquial German than I do. Through the books I developed a feeling for the German language that they, although they speak German without an accent, lack.

But even I couldn't bear to miss one television program, and that was "Dallas" – every Tuesday at 9:45 p.m. How I admired the dream couple Bobby and Pamela Ewing, how astonished I was by Lucy's cheekiness, Lucy who really took every liberty. Dallas – that was my window into the Western world. And how disappointed I was, when I later had to come

to the conclusion that many things in the west were different than they were in this apparently so glamorous American world.

Whether out of defiance or out of a thirst for knowledge, I was one of the best in school. At that time we Turks all went to high school, especially the girls. There they got their diplomas (or not), married (or were married off), had many children, and sank out of sight among diapers, cooking pots, and shopping bags. I was certain that I didn't want that, at least not exclusively. I was absolutely determined to get a proper education. And, on top of that, I wanted to be rid of my head scarf. It simply didn't suit me. It made me short and ugly; I didn't feel good wearing it. As soon as I was out of our house and around the corner, I pulled it off my head and stuffed it into my satchel. In school we didn't have to wear it, quite the contrary in fact, the principal had actually forbidden it. For that, we loved him.

To this day my mother can't understand it. In her life the head scarf had always been something very meaningful. It was an honor, and one had to reach a certain age before one was allowed to wear it at all. All the girls and women in her village wore one; she grew up with it, and it was a part of her trousseau. She lovingly decorated her scarves with embroidery and borders and wore them on her wedding day. The color of a head scarf was predetermined according to the age of the wearer: young girls had white scarves, women of marriageable age wore red, and the black head scarves were reserved for older women.

For my mother, the head scarf is a part of the Islamic tradition. In the meantime, it would no longer occur to her to wear it as a decorative accessory. She hasn't worn eye-catching patterns for a long time now, but rather prefers muted colors like beige or gray, and she fastens the ends with two unostentatious knots under her chin. Indeed she is, as she says, not a young girl anymore.

My older sister never abandoned her head scarf either. Ablam wears gorgeous scarves from Kenzo, Versace, and Valentino, for which she is ready to dish out between two and four hundred Euro. For her, the head scarf is, on the one hand, a sign of religiosity and, on the other hand, her most important fashion accessory. "Nowhere is it written that Muslim women must dress like scarecrows!" she says. There are over fifty scarves in her wardrobe, in all colors and shades and made out of different materials. Last summer she wore scarves with a golden chain and anchor print; in winter she prefers strong colors or batik patterns. Seasonal trends underlie head scarf fashion, as they do other fashions.

In another drawer Ablam keeps brooches, pins made out of high-carat gold, and pearls, which she uses to ensure that the scarf doesn't slide out of place. It's the front section of the scarf that has to remain secure – round or angular, according to the preference of the wearer. When Ablam wears a silk scarf, she puts a piece of Saran wrap on the top of her head so that the scarf doesn't slip backwards. There are dozens of ways to tie a scarf, and sometimes there's not even long hair tucked away under these artistic formations, but rather fashionable short hairstyles or little balls of material that make the head scarf fall in a particular shape. Every Muslim woman ties her head scarf differently, according to which country she is from.

Turkish teenagers, for example, knot their hair into a thick bun near the top of their heads so that the scarf has a high edge. So arranged, it tumbles like a waterfall over their shoulders. Or they fold one part of the scarf inwards into a triangle at the level of their eyebrows in order to frame the face.

When I was a child I didn't know how much tradition and culture, and what religious meaning, lay hidden under the head scarf. I simply found it annoying and wanted to free myself from it.

At school I had a favorite teacher. She taught us German and English. At the time Frau Krüger was in her early thirties, had neither a husband nor children, and was, for me, the epitome of independence. When I watched how she drove into the teachers' parking lot in her little red car, my heart glowed with admiration. Frau Krüger also taught me what it meant to "be of age." "When you're eighteen, Hatice," she said to me, "then you are of age – an adult. Then no one can tell you what to do." That made an indelible impression on me. I'd hardly finished my seventeenth year when I applied without further ado for an apprenticeship training position at the municipal court and moved out of my parents' house. My parents weren't particularly enthusiastic about it, but what could they do? I first found a room in a student residence, then eventually, a couple of years later, I could even afford my own apartment.

On the day I moved out I began a new existence. I even began counting my birthdays from zero again. In the mornings, I marched into the court or into the vocational school, and in the afternoons and on weekends I worked at an ice cream parlor. And at night, at night I made up for everything I had missed. For the most part we met at "Old Daddy," the hippest club in the whole of the Ruhr Valley. I had my first experiences with alcohol and other drugs. There was nothing I didn't sample.

And neither was I lacking in imagination when it came to my career choices. After my education and training I went to New York for a year as an au pair, I completed my professional diploma, worked as a translator, began studying business administration, and

helped out in a call center. My ambition would not leave me in peace. I tried everything until I lost my appetite for it and something new aroused my passion. During this time I also met my first serious boyfriend, Stefan, and moved in with him.

I became a journalist more or less by accident. The local-news section of a newspaper in Duisburg – the *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* – needed someone to interview Turkish criminals for forensic reportage. But it didn't stop there. I did an internship as a journalist and was suddenly up to my ears in interviews, research, and travel for the purpose of reporting. I had finally found a career that I could imagine wanting to do for the rest of my life.

When a new magazine was founded in Berlin, I moved to the capital city. Only now did the truly independent life I had always dreamed of begin for me. I was responsible for the glamour pages of the magazine and came into contact with plenty of glamour myself. I did interviews with Cameron Diaz and Drew Barrymore, drank champagne with Sean Connery, met Brad Pitt, joked with Tom Cruise, and looked deep into the eyes of Robbie Williams. I rushed from one wild party to the next, from film premieres to fashion shows, traveled to Monaco and Cannes, to Hollywood and Milan, stayed in chic luxury hotels, walked down red carpets, wore long evening gowns and high-heeled shoes. It was a wonderful time, which I enjoyed to the fullest. Whenever I glided through the Mediterranean on some luxury yacht, nipped champagne, or balanced appetizers between my fingertips, I thought involuntarily of my Anatolian family in their sofa landscape, or of life in our village and my grandfather's sheep. Then I marveled every time at the great distance I had covered.

Two years later the good life had passed, and at exactly the right time, because I had gradually begun to get bored and to look for a serious challenge. Before our editorial

department was dismantled and we were laid off as a result of the media crisis, I sent a report proposal on Afghanistan to various newspapers and quickly received approval. I waved "au revoir" to my glamour section and a short time later found myself on a plane to Kabul.

For many months I had been dealing intensively with the overthrow of the Taliban. I had read all the articles about it and was concerned with the question of how much freedom the war would bring for the women in Afghanistan. In Kabul I chose a driving school for women and the newly opened beauty salon; I wanted to talk to women about their hopes and dreams, I wanted to rejoice with them about their new life. However, my hopes of encountering an excited atmosphere of change materialized only partially.

I stayed in Afghanistan for two weeks, stumbled through the ruins of the city, did my interviews, and engaged in an endless number of conversations. I was even granted entry to the women's prison. That was because of the fact that, among other things, I have an Arabic name and was wearing a head scarf. It was lucky that I had one with me at all; I had rather casually stuck it in my suitcase before my departure. For the first time since I left my parents' house, I put it back on as a matter of course. In this country I felt naked and vulnerable without a head scarf. In the eyes of the women who didn't feel safe leaving the house without a burka, my appearance of course had a revolutionary effect.

On the flight back from Afghanistan I became conscious for the first time of the many and diverse possibilities that I have to put my, at the time, somewhat rash departure from my parents' house to a sensible and meaningful use in the future. On the one hand, in the years afterwards, I gained entrance to Germany and the western parallel world; on the other hand, I had and still have the opportunity in my career to draw creatively upon the experiences and impressions that have had a lasting influence on me from my strict

Anatolian-Muslim childhood. Without the head scarf experience and the knowledge about the world of women in Muslim societies I would never have been able to write a report about the new Kabul. In the last couple of years, I've turned increasingly to Turkish topics; I was once again in Solingen and took a retrospective look ten years after the arson attack.[20] That has nothing to do with glamour anymore.

After a long time, my parents and I have found our way back to one another. I pay them the respect that I owe, and they have accepted my independent life. When I visit them, I stop shortly before I reach their house in Duisburg, open the trunk, and retrieve a blouse with half-length sleeves and a knee-length skirt out of my bag. Only once I've changed my clothes do I continue driving. It saves me long discussions with my father – he can be in the right, and I have my peace and quiet.

This ceased to be a question of principle for me long ago, and I don't feel that I'm oppressed as a woman. It simply doesn't matter to me whether the skirt I wear when I visit my father ends above my knee or below it. For my father, on the other hand, the shorter version would be a provocation, and so I just let it be. Ten years ago, I would have worn the skirt an extra hand's width shorter, simply in the interest of rebellion. Today, I don't have to do that anymore. And besides, my legs have gotten too chubby for miniskirts anyway.

Sometimes my parents also visit me. Even when, as a result, they drag their world into mine, I look forward to their visits. I put away all my high-heeled shoes and low-cut clothing, hide the magazines with the half-naked models on the cover, and tidy up the apartment so that my mother doesn't immediately pass out. When the two of them visited me for the first time in Berlin, they even slept in my bed. I was so glad that I almost broke into tears, but I didn't let on.

The next morning my father asked me where I had gotten my comforter. He had slept incredibly well. I looked at him uncomprehendingly. Well, the pillow and the comforter. They were so wonderfully light, but at the same time so warm and comfortable. He was totally enthused. While my mother turned the kitchen upside down trying to arrange as many provisions for me as possible before they both headed home, I played "tavla" with my father. The sun shone through the slanted window of my attic apartment; the light fell on my father's fine old face, his still full head of hair, and for a moment it was as if there had never been a problem between us.

On my next visit to Duisburg I had a particularly bulky gift in my luggage. It wasn't heavy, but it was very large. After my father had laboriously removed the paper and ribbons, his green eyes lit up. "Berlin Eiderdown" he said quietly and happily ran his hand over the soft, smooth surface.

6. One Order of Hans with Hot Sauce

On the first date with a man I never have sex, rather I hint at the promise of sex. This increases the chances of a further meeting immensely. If my chosen man shows any semblance of future potential, I begin the preparations for our next meeting a whole three days in advance. It begins with juice fasting and daily stomach-legs-bottom exercises, followed by a pedicure, a manicure, as well as full-body hair removal, and ends with my buying a new dress. Because I know that no one conquers a man with such simple tricks, shortly before the reunion, I pull out the big guns: I bathe in milk and honey, have the hairdresser put my hair up, commission my friend Julia to come over and verify that the dress doesn't make my behind look too wide, and finally put on my jewels: high heels. I love preparing myself for dates. Sometimes I arrange to meet someone simply for the process of preparation, even though I am not at all interested in the man.

Now, by date I don't mean the whole candlelit dinner thing with a fireplace, Australian Shiraz, and afterwards some awkward groping on the leather sofa. I mean those evenings when the air itself burns, when one feels sick with excitement, and drinks far too much alcohol far too quickly.

Unfortunately that hasn't happened very often of late. This is perhaps a result of my fiery Anatolian heart being regularly shock frosted by dispassionate Central Europeans. After the last couple unsuccessful dates, not only did I have to take care of the iciness in my heart, which until this point I had been able to bring under control with a bottle of prosecco,

but I also had to listen to my sister Fatma's tongue-lashing all the way from Turkey: "You sit there in a loft with a view over Berlin, slurp latte macchiato every morning, wear Gucci Mucci, and your heart is freezing anyway!" As she berates me, she sits, as usual, on her balcony in Izmir and files her nails.

And all the while, my demands are really not that high. I just want passion, a few compliments – not many, perhaps one for every hour, or portion thereof. I want him to pine for me and to teeter nervously back and forth on his chair. And for that I'll happily pay my half of the bill – ach, what am I talking about – I'll pay the whole thing.

Fatma says that a woman deserves everything on a first date: passion, compliments, and a princely meal. Because after one is married, a man's enthusiasm dwindles of its own accord. If the German prince fouls up the first date, I'd be better to toss him aside immediately.

I can discuss my problems with German men better with Ablam. She listens to everything patiently, advises me to try dating a Turkish man, and promises to keep our conversation to herself. Now, it's not easy for a Turkish woman to keep secrets. I know this very well. Ablam calls Fatma in Turkey, tells her everything, but makes her swear up and down to keep it to herself. A short time later, my telephone rings, and one of those situations follows where I could strangle Ablam and hate my sister Fatma, because she shows me yet again how German I have become in the meantime. First there's quiet on the line, then I hear Fatma take a deep breath, and then I have to hold the receiver at least twenty centimetres away from my ear: "Can it be, that on this whole goddamn planet it occurs only to German

men to pay separately on the first date? And can it be that you're the only woman who still puts up with that? What kind of Helga do I have for a sister?"

She must never learn that most of the time I'll even pay the entire bill in a restaurant, because I find paying separately so unpleasant. I happily take care of the embarrassing situation in front of the waiter by saying: "Oh, give it here; it just so happens that Turkish hospitality is at our table today."

Unfortunately, Fatma's right. I don't understand either why German men have a preference for this sort of stinginess. In any case, I've never experienced it with a man of any other nationality. A Turk would borrow from friends or sell his car in order to take the woman of his heart to the best and most expensive restaurant, and the woman wouldn't once notice that he's gone totally stone broke. Turkish men are perfect at self-marketing. Always talk big and, as a matter of course, act as though one's pockets are full of money: "A woman like you, in this dress, will never need a wallet again." I must admit, that I enjoy this sort of compliment, although it sounds particularly macho. I once wore a dress that was so tight, it looked like I had been shot into it, and the only thing my Hans said in response was: "You look nice." Whereupon I grabbed him by the shoulders, shook him, and cried: "Give me passion, damn it, I want passion!" He just looked at me, perplexed.

To this day, I've only once met a German man who had a Turkish soul. He had blue eyes, golden-yellow hair, and just one tiny little problem. For many years he had owned a jersey from his favorite soccer club, MSV Duisburg. It occupied a place of honor in his wardrobe. Every eight to twelve weeks, he took it out of the wardrobe, washed it in the sink using shampoo for extremely sensitive hair, hung it on a wooden hanger to dry, and, after

it was dry, folded it such that the logo of the sponsor at the time – Sparkasse – was exactly centered, and put it back in its place.

He loved this jersey a great deal, but there was one thing very wrong with it. He had received it as a gift when he was thirteen. Back then he wore children's size 156. In the meantime, 190 cm tall and weighing in at 85 kg, only his right arm would fit in the jersey.

When he asked me for the first time, I told him I thought he was perverse. "Please," he beseeched me. I refused categorically. He asked me again. He asked me at every home game until, at some point, I gave in, exasperated. Shortly before we set off for the game, I went into the bedroom, took the relic out of the wardrobe, and put it on. I looked like Pamela Anderson wearing one of Ally McBeal's T-shirts after it had been washed in hot water. When I stood in front of him wearing the jersey that stretched so tightly over my breasts that my nipples hurt, and a MSV scarf that I'd wrapped around my waist, he began to weep for joy. I swear, tears were running down his cheeks. I put it on and sat with him in the north end of the stadium. And he promised to marry me and to be faithful forever and always.

German men are really odd. When it comes time for them to be giving compliments and swearing their love, they can't think of a thing to say. But when it has to do with football and cars, they develop a downright Turkish passion.

At this point I must make clear what exactly I understand as a compliment. "Canım" means "my soul." If a Turkish man says "hayatım" to me, it means that I'm not only the reason he gets up in the morning, and the last thought he has before he falls asleep, but rather that his life would be unthinkable without me, that I'm his whole life. I also like to hear "şekerım"; that means "my sweet," and when one thinks of the exquisite desserts Turkish

cuisine has produced, then one can, at least to some degree, get a measure for the inexpressible pleasure resonating within this word.

But watch out! One must please never confuse this wonderful compliment with "sikerim," or else there will be trouble. "Sikerim" is the worst expletive in the Turkish language and means something along the lines of "I'm really going to nail you this time." And to be honest, I wouldn't want to be around if someone mixed these two words up. The word "sikerim" is so obscene that I don't have the heart to provide an exact translation. The particular thing about this word is that it can, as needed, be arbitrarily expanded to include an entire extended family, depending on how irate one is. For a Turk it is never enough simply to insult the one he's angry with, rather he has to bring the mother, the wife, or even the whole kinfolk into play. And preferably, he combines all variations thereof. Which then sounds like this: "Senin ananı, avratını, sülaleni, gelmişini, geçmişini sikerim" (First I'll nail your mother, you wife, and all the rest of your relatives, and to finish off, your ancestors and your offspring).

Be careful with pet names as well: One may never call a Turkish woman bunny, mouse, or little bear.[21] This causes trouble. In Turkish, bunny is "tavşan," and, used as a pet name, it implies that the object of one's affection has rabbit teeth. Turks generally consider mice to be small and ugly, and little bear means that one's beloved is not only fat, but also just as hairy as a bear. With regards to "mouse," the Germans could learn a lesson from the Turks. A nation that says "young man" to boys, but uses "little mouse" as a pet name for girls is still far from understanding who actually holds the power in the country.

"Tekmelemek" is also a word that Germans could easily confuse. It doesn't mean anything like "Techtelmechtel,"[22] but rather to kick someone until he lies bleeding on the floor. This is exactly what happens if a man calls a Turkish woman by the wrong pet name.

"If you want passion, why are you picking out a 'potato' for yourself? Do you want a real man, or one who fetches rolls in the morning?" my Turkish girlfriend Hülya asked me. Of course, I want a man and not a roll fetcher. Hülya can talk, though. After all, she herself has worked hard to turn her "potato" into a real man. During her first date with him, she inconspicuously removed her panties with two deft hand movements under the table in the restaurant, tenderly pressed them into his hand before the dessert was served, and said: "Come on, let's get out of here." The man was confused at first, but then he grinned and disappeared with her. The two are now a couple, and Hülya recounted proudly that she had already instilled a great deal of passion in him, and it definitely wouldn't be much longer before he went so far as to declare his love for her in Turkish. I considered for a short while whether I should try the move with the panties on my next date, but I quickly rejected the idea when I fell off my chair while trying to remove them inconspicuously under the table at home.

I don't think it's too much to ask for a man to come to the door to meet his date, even when it's very cold outside, and not to announce his arrival with a quick call on his cell phone: "I'll be there in a minute. Are you coming down?" so that he doesn't have to get out of the car. A Turkish man would not only ring the doorbell and wait by the door, but he would first take off his jacket and unbutton the top three buttons of his shirt. He would lean nonchalantly on his car and hungrily follow every step the woman takes with a lascivious

gaze. Then he would leap in front of her with a single bound, greet her with tender kisses left and right, tell her that she is his world, gallantly open the car door, and, of course, shut it again. But he could do all this only after twenty minutes or so, because that's how long a Turkish woman would generally make him wait – which no Turkish man would ever hold against her, because it quite simply belongs to the rules of dating.

A while ago, a German man picked me up from my house in his car. I was very confident at first, because he rang the doorbell rather then giving notice of his arrival over the airwaves. But when I came down, I saw that he was sitting in his car, and this despite the fact that he was wearing a down jacket and his car had heated seats. I swear, I spun around on my ten centimeter high heels and went straight back into my apartment. I could see only that he looked very puzzled. I called him on his cell phone from up in my apartment and said: "Now listen good, Mister! It's two degrees outside; I'm wearing a skirt that's as thin as rice paper, I decided against stockings because the color of the polish on my toenails matches the color of my bra, my shoes begin ten centimeters above the ground, and you're sitting in the car and waiting for me?" Then I hung up.

Okay, I regretted it a bit afterwards; he really was very sweet. But for once I had to set an example for those women being waited on by the thousands by men in down jackets and heated cars. And of course I did it for my sister who, after I had told her the story, was very proud of me.

My brother Mustafa deals with the, for him, bothersome pick-up scenario in his own way. He honks until his German girlfriend's neighbors open their windows and yell at him to piss off. Then he cranks the Turkish music up louder, pandemonium booming out of his

gigantic speakers, gets out of the car, twirls his sideburns, and calls back: "Ey, you got paroblem, or what?" He climbs back into his BMW and waits placidly for his girlfriend.

By the way, the music that blares out of almost all cars driven by Turks has one distinct advantage for Germans: They don't understand the lyrics. I, on the other hand, sometimes can absolutely not believe that hardboiled Turkish men in their cowboy boots, with switchblades in their trouser pockets, get all teary-eyed when they listen to these melodramatic and unbelievably kitschy songs. The topic is always disloyalty between a man and a woman, whereby most often the greater part of the wickedness is attributed to the woman. I find that a bit unfair. In some song lyrics Allah himself has to endure the questions of the abandoned party. In a voice contorted with pain, he wants to know why Allah approves of his suffering – after all, he is a human being – and he would like to know if Allah has created him only as a plaything for other human beings. Cut to the quick, deserted lovers give account of their pain. The heart always bleeds, they were always treated like dirt, it is always an even thousand knives they had rammed into their hearts, despite the purity and uniqueness of their love. Although they hope the subject of the song is burning in hell, they would rather continue to live together with them there than to arrive in paradise alone.

For Turks everything has to do with love, death, and passion – so with the really big things in life. Hülya explains the phenomenon of oriental drama as follows: "The Turk inherently loves suffering. What counts in a German romantic relationship as a good mixture of closeness and distance, for a Turk, is solely love and pain."

And she's right: The Turk always wants to kill or be killed, depending on the circumstances. He must vociferously convey his existential state to everyone, so that the

entire world comes to know what has befallen him. If his heart is aching, he doesn't even want his beloved to appear at his grave; if he's in love, he would burn down entire cities for her.

I don't think that one has to stage a second fall of Rome for a great love, but it could certainly be a bit more than the commonly employed German declaration of love. "I think I like you," often marks the beginning of a German romantic relationship. It generally progresses to "You're very dear to me," and the crown jewel of all German declarations of love is: "I want to grow old with you." Well, thanks! He should be blond, my lover, he should throw fiery glances out of blué eyes, and have simmering blood in his veins. After I last fell in love, I wrote the one I adored an email that went on for pages and ended with the sentence: "I burn and burn, and you're so difficult to ignite." His answer was just as prompt as it was uninspired: "We could go for a drink sometime."

Unfortunately, I can't ask anyone for advice as to how I can find the man I imagine. Some don't understand my problem, because they've been married for a long time now. And the others who don't have anyone themselves, what am I supposed to learn from them? If the bald man knew of a treatment, he would rub it on his own head.

Until I've found him, I'll continue to regularly dial the number of my sister in Turkey and listen to the tips that, in her opinion, work every time: "Never call a man," she commands me. "Always let him call you. Don't ever get yourself to a date; tell him that he should pick you up, and promise me now and for all time that you will never pay again!" I promise and cross my fingers.

7. My Beautiful Waxing-Salon

Recently I bathed in milk and honey again – I do this regularly every two weeks, and in milk with 3.5% fat at that. Low fat milk in the coffee, high fat milk in the bath water; that's easy enough to remember. So I pour four liters of milk and one container of Langnese "Flotte Biene" wildflower honey into the bathwater, stir it all up with a wooden spoon until the honey has dissolved into the hot, milky water, lay myself down in the brew, drink prosecco, and listen to Leonard Cohen. After an hour my mind's addled, my senses sharpened, my heart touched by melancholy love songs, and my skin as smooth as alabaster. All that costs me less than ten Euro, and I get a priceless party anecdote into the bargain.

If there is something with which you can drive German men mad, it's to mention as casually as possible that yesterday, at long last, you finally had time to bathe in milk and honey again, but unfortunately there was no one else there to wash your hair for you and to sigh a little bit while doing so. Those types who most definitely also keep a box of Kleenex by their beds ask: "Really? You bathe in milk and honey? Isn't that a bit sticky?" Yeah, of course it's sticky, but you can wash it off, damn it! Only Turkish men react very nonchalantly and say "oof," which basically means "cool."

Why does a bath in milk and honey sound more exotic to Germans than, for example, a caviar face mask? And why is the expression "to bathe in milk and honey" used all over the place, but no one actually does it? Except, of course, Turkish women. Because Turkish women know that milk and honey contain lots of vitamins, these give one soft skin, and the

best bath additives don't always come from plastic bottles. And above all because Turkish women know how one drives men mad. Is there anything more sensual than lying in a bath of milk and honey, while the man kneels in front of the bathtub and washes your hair for you? I can stay in the bath for hours, completely forgetting the time.

My bathtub at home is a small version of the hamam – a bath for the soul. One lingers and chats in a Turkish steam bath; it is a party for the spirit and the body. Turks love their hamam. So much so, that there are now these steam baths in every larger German city. Men are permitted to enter only on certain days, because hamams are strictly divided according to gender. Nevertheless, a visit to the hamam is comparable to the perfect date, because it touches your soul and sometimes even warms your heart.

Women sit or lie in the "hararet," the steam room, laughing and talking ceaselessly, and the wet walls resound, spitting their sentences back at them. Even just this atmosphere is very different from that of a sauna. "Be quiet please, we're not at a tea party here," I was once scolded in a sauna, when I had wanted to whisper the latest gossip to my girlfriend Julia. In the sauna women sit like roosting hens, and if they ever venture out of their shells, one hears at most a dull "Puh, is it ever hot," or "Could someone pour some water on the stones?"[23]

In contrast, women in the Hamam loll about on the "göbek taş," the heated marble slab in the middle of the steam room, and tell of love and passion, and of poems written for them by their fiancés. "You are my heaven, my warm bed, the keeper of my heart, my fate, the stiller of my pain, the whetter of my appetite, my light at dawn, you are everything to me." The girlfriends laugh, listen spellbound, and sometimes sigh a little. When they peel

off their "peştamal," a sturdy, colorfully checkered waistcloth, it's as if precious paintings are being unveiled: beauties with hip-long black hair, tiny birthmarks on their dark skin, and golden points gleaming in their eyes.

The women who take care of the hamam guests are so enchanting they look as though they've just come out of a harem. Their faces resemble those of Persian princesses, their eyes are like the oil from the Caspian Sea, and at the same time they have arms like a troop of Turkish butchers. When they first begin with their work, one feels as though one has fallen into the hands of a sumo wrestler. They rub your entire body with a "kese," a peeling glove made out of goat hair. Thirty minutes later, you feel four kilos lighter. And no wonder, because all over your body curl parmesan-like flakes of skin, which the hamam attendant washes down the drain with two, three flushes of water. It's a good thing that there are no men here; after seeing this process, they would never again believe in a woman's beauty.

Incidentally, men prefer the soap massage to the parmesan grater, also a gimmick from the Ottoman Empire. In a cloud of foam, the masseur's hands glide back and forth from the hamam patron's head to the tips of his toes, and the scent of the olive soap is marvelously fresh and pleasant.

The last station in the hamam is the "soğukluk," a room for cooling off and relaxing. To ward off thirst, there is Turkish tea and "ayran," the salty yogurt drink. Those who are hungry are also provided for. A buffet bends under the weight of glorious snacks – little breads, raw vegetables, and fresh fruits.

As passionately as Turkish women devote themselves to the art of bathing, another detail of personal hygiene is just as important to them, and that is hair removal. A couple of

years ago, I took my girlfriend Julia with me to visit my parents. It was summer, thirty degrees outside, and we wore light summer clothes for the drive to Duisburg. My parents greeted Julia warmly. We drank "çay," Turkish tea, and my mother always came into the living room with a new variation on börek, and asked Julia: "You like?" Outside my father fired up the barbecue, and we prepared ourselves inwardly before having to devour oodles of mutton.

Julia wore a knitted cardigan over her sleeveless dress, and, because of the heat, she took this little jacket off in the yard. I noticed how the fine motor activity of my mother's face suddenly gave way, and she stared dumbfounded at Julia's shoulders. I saw it then too, as a matter of fact; a mousy-gray colored bush welled out from under Julia's arms. Upon closer inspection it became clear that it wasn't a bush at all, but rather a jungle. Even today I still shiver when I remember it. On the drive back home I said: "Julia, we have to talk about your underarm hair."

For me, that was not an insult, but the announcement of a long-overdue ritual. I, for example, was fourteen when I came home from school one day and found my mother in front of the stove, where she was preparing a brew of sugar, lemon, and water that didn't look as if it could be very palatable. I wondered a bit, but didn't think anything more of it, and lay down on my bed with a book. After a while, my mother knocked on the door with the pot in her hand and said: "Hatice, I have to talk to you about your underarm hair."

That was the most painful day of my life. At least until the day my mother knocked on my door again and wanted to speak to me about my bikini zone. I have hardly any memory of these endless sessions. Today I'm sure that I passed out from the pain. My

mother just snorted: "You can tolerate the least pain of all my four daughters. How will you ever manage to give birth to a whole child?"

Despite my panicky fear of hair removal then, today I'm an expert at it, and it's not uncommon for girlfriends to lie on the tile floor in my bathroom and have me perform whole-body hair removal with warm wax. By now I've brought them so far with legs and underarms that they no longer scream the house down. But as soon as I get anywhere close to the bikini zone, I'm answered with a whimper, and after the first tug I would best like to seal up their mouths with carpet tape. And then I hear myself saying: "You have absolutely no tolerance for pain. How will you ever manage to give birth to a whole child?" As thanks for my trouble, they reward me with a stupid joke: "Why do Turkish men look like their mothers?" they ask me. And I answer: "Because they have moustaches." Ha ha, very funny.

I too have hair on my upper lip, but it regularly comes off, and without much fuss. To do this I don't use tweezers or wax; instead, I employ a very special method of plucking. I tie two threads into a round circle, stretch it between the thumb and forefinger of each hand, and twist it once, so that the threads cross in the middle. Now, I slide these crossed threads back and forth, and thus end up with a sort of scissor that gets very close to the base of the hairs, and with one tug can pull them out against the direction of hair growth. The advantage over tweezers is that I can remove the hair from a greater area of skin in one go. The thread scissor also captures the tiniest hairs – yes, even the fuzzy down. It is horribly painful, but also very efficient.

As soon as the smallest hair sprouts anywhere on my face or body, it's immediately plucked, waxed, or otherwise painfully removed. My eyebrows are particularly important

to me. In Turkey it is said that: "A woman's eyebrows are the window to her face." When I visit Ablam, she's standing ready at the door, tweezers in hand, to correct my eyebrows. She often greets me with the words: "You look like Theo Waigel.[24] It's no wonder you don't get a man."

Once I sat sobbing in front of a German beautician because she had spoiled the arc of my eyebrow. "How dare you destroy my arc," I spat at her. I hardly dared to look in the mirror anymore; I looked like many of the Eastern-European women who shave their eyebrows off entirely, only to draw them back on in dead straight lines with eyebrow pencil. For weeks I didn't have the heart to leave the house, and for important appointments I painted the plucked areas back on. But, because my fingers constantly rub my chin, cheeks, and temples, I had quickly distributed the charcoal color over my entire face, and looked like Roberto Blanco.[25] My sister Fatma in Turkey just shrugged her shoulders in response: "Why on earth are you going to the Helgas? It's your own fault."

Every half year in Turkey I have my eyebrows plucked to a perfect arc– the kind of arc that peaks boldly in the exact middle of the brow. And when I'm back in Germany, only Ablam in Duisburg is allowed to remove the hairs that have grown back. Sometimes I ask myself if men actually notice how perfect the arcs of my eyebrows are?

Incidentally, Turkish women would not, under any circumstances, shave. And what good would it do, anyway? After all, it doesn't hurt. Sometimes, when a date very suddenly announces himself, I do shave my legs. But Ablam must never find out about it. Once I confessed this to her; she looked at me like I was guilty of high treason and hissed angrily: "You shouldn't shave! Look: Now two hairs are going to grow out of every pore." And when

I tried to defend myself by explaining that I'd had a date, she said with even more fury: "And what does a man want with your legs on the first date?" She's actually right. Hairy legs are the most effective contraceptive. Sometimes when I'm really serious about a man, I intentionally leave every hair in place for the first date, simply so that I don't give in to temptation and bring him up to my apartment with me.

This doesn't help all the time either. Once I kissed a man passionately in the car, but couldn't really enjoy the kiss because I was thinking the whole time of the lamentable state my legs were in. "No, Hatice, you can't bring him up with you – under no circumstances," I swore to myself.

An hour later I gave up anyway. I won't let the cosmetic industry dictate to me how I have to look, I told myself. And a man has to love me the way I am, and above all, it's natural to have hair on one's legs, and I'm an emancipated woman, and my belly belongs to me, period. Unfortunately I never heard from the man again after that night.

In Turkey there's an "ağda salonu," a wax salon, on every corner. Things are always very hectic here. One doesn't need an appointment, rather one simply goes there, gets undressed, stands on a stool, and in just twenty minutes one's freed from all body hair. "Abla, dön," the often very young girls say, and by this they mean that one should simply rotate around one's own axis, such that they can apply the wax, and then pull it, and the hair, off again.

As a woman, one has to decide, at some point, if one wants to be a cow or a goat. Here I'm referring to a woman's weight. In Turkey they say that a gram of flesh covers a

thousand faults. This sort of wisdom is the reason why Turkish women much too often decide for the cow. This is how it looks for me: I inherited from my mother hips amply suited for child-bearing, which has not helped me much so far. At the same time, I just measure in at one meter seventy tall. I admit, with high heels. But because I always, everywhere, and at all times have at least ten centimeters under my feet, for all intents and purposes I'm one meter seventy tall. Thus, my true height becomes manifest only in the horizontal, and in this position height isn't particularly important. Upstairs I wear cup-size C, and my behind is comparable to that of an Anatolian mountain cow. When I bend forwards, one could happily and easily balance a platter with six tea glasses on it.

A couple of weeks ago I complained to my mother that I felt like I was becoming increasingly plump without really eating any more. My mother said, those are the Turkish genes. But I'm fairly certain that it's the böreks – delicate pastry pockets filled with feta cheese, spinach, and ground meat. To put my mind at ease, she added that I didn't have to worry; after all, there wasn't a single fat person in our entire extended family.

My father, who had overheard the conversation, furrowed his brow and said: "My darling, what about you?" My mother took a deep breath, and even though my mother couldn't very well say to my father that she'd carried him in her belly for nine months and given him her breast, my father still had to use all his charms to entice her back out of the corner of the sofa. And you could forget the böreks that day as well.

I have to hear: "Yemeğin salçalısı, kadının kalçalısı" (What tomato paste is for food, hips are for women) from Fatma every time I jealously stare at her figure. It's not fair that she tries to console me with such a stupid saying. After all, she can wrap a hand towel

around her waist, whereas I would require a beach blanket. Her breasts appear carefully sculpted and sit exactly where they belong, she has high cheekbones, and how is it possible for someone to have bigger eyes than mine, when my friends call me Bambi? When one looks like this, it is, of course, simple enough to say that the most important thing for a good meal is the spices, and for a good woman, the hips.

A while ago, Fatma visited me for the first time in Berlin. I told my friends about her visit, and the only thing that my male friends wanted to know about her was if she was as feminine as I was. I told them that she was even more feminine, and it's true. She is my father's favorite daughter, not only because she is very good looking, but because she has an enchanting attractiveness. Formerly, she often took advantage of this to get what she wanted. Today Fatma is over thirty and still thinks that she can achieve everything with her charming face and cute behind. Before my friends met her for the first time, they said: "It's not possible to be more feminine than you." After the first meeting, they whispered in my ear: "You were right; she really is more feminine – and beautiful like a princess."

A couple of weeks ago I invited Fatma to Berlin again for a big birthday party that I wanted to give. I warned her on the telephone, however, that she was allowed to come only if she would hold back a bit on this particular evening, and above all, not look better than me; after all, it was my big day. "Wait a second, I've got to go to the bedroom," was her only reply. I listened as she ran through the house with the cordless telephone, suddenly stood still, and said: "So, I'm standing in front of the mirror now. Oh, that's going to be difficult."

For my German friends, my appearance is already dazzling, and they often wonder at the fact that I even appear at business meetings wearing large earrings, low-cut tops, high-

heeled shoes, and a skirt. They say: "You know, I wouldn't feel comfortable in those impractical clothes," and secretly insinuate that I use my "role as a woman" for professional advancement.

These thoughts don't exist in Turkey. And Fatma certainly doesn't think that way. A woman is not only a woman, but a lady. And she's always a lady, period. How can one exploit something that one embodies anyway, that one can't possibly set aside? So I look forward to my next visit to Turkey, make myself beautiful, have my eyebrows plucked, undergo hair removal, and put on my prettiest dress. My Turkish girlfriends greet me in bewitching elegance and ask me: "Well, have you finally found a Hans?" and smile softly as they whisper to me: "You could stand to do something for your appearance."

8. The Religious Experience

There are things that don't just happen in one's head. Like love, religion or – the addiction to shoes. In my life, shoes mean a great deal, but it was a long way to get to this point. My mother would never have allowed us children to wear shoes in the house. Even today I sometimes bend down instinctively at the doors of my German friends' houses and say, "I can take my shoes off, if you like." It's taken me years to shed this Turkish habit.

When I'd forgotten something in the house as a child, I'd hop through the room on the toes of my shoes to retrieve it. If my mother saw me and screamed hysterically: "Not with your shoes on!" I'd throw myself to the ground, take what ever it was that I'd forgotten between my teeth, lift my feet into the air, and crawl out on my hands and knees. Wearing shoes in our house was just as forbidden as pork on my father's barbecue. And while Allah would probably have forgiven us for the pork, my mother would certainly not have pardoned street shoes on her carpets.

My parents' understanding of shoes consists of the fact that they must serve a purpose. Shoes protect feet from cold and grime, provide a good foothold when working, and one can cover a lot of ground quickly in them. At least with my father, this attitude hadn't changed since he took off his ankle-high, calf-leather shoes in the village all those years ago, had a new pair made by the village cobbler, put them on his feet, and came to Germany. My mother is also not to be dissuaded from her practical footwear with thick rubber soles. She would never even think of regarding shoes as fashionable accessories.

With me, luckily, things are very different. Shoes are my religion. It was a couple of years ago now that I experienced my spiritual awakening. There they stood, nobly presented on a large shelf: thin, golden leather straps and a slender heel on which the shoes floated ten centimeters above the ground. I found myself in a shoe store in New York, but not in just any shoe store. And what I beheld were the first Manolo Blahniks of my life. Their magic took my breath away, I was overcome by a feeling of reverence and adoration, inwardly I sank to my knees. You don't know what Manolo Blahniks are? I'd be happy to tell you. There are shoes, and there are Manolos. Manolos aren't just a brand, they're works of art, they're gestures, they're enchanting, sexy, and indescribably glamorous. Manolos pay homage to the foot of womankind. Sun and southern passion came naturally to their master, Manolo Blahnik. His mother is Spanish, he was born in the Canary Islands, and his adorable shoes look as though they've jumped out of a painting by Velásques or Zubarán. They've been known to his female devotees for decades now, but they've achieved particular fame in the last couple of years through the television series "Sex and the City."

As I gazed upon the first Manolos of my life, I imagined to myself the incredible patience and sensitivity with which the shoemaker must have worked the leather to produce this pair of shoes. It goes without saying that every pair is made by hand. Manolo Blahniks exude an air of eternity, and I was overcome by an indescribable feeling as I imagined them on my feet. For the first time shoes served another purpose for me than simply conveying me painlessly from one place to another. I had to have a pair immediately.

At the time I paid for the Manolos with my credit card because my checking account would never have covered such a sum. Months later I was still waitressing to pay for this one

pair of shoes. I still have them today; I keep them on my bookshelf between the hardback version of *The Lord of the Rings* and the collected works of Kafka. When I look at them I see myself wearing them and balancing along Fifth Avenue in a summer dress, I hear the clicking noise that the heels made against the asphalt. It is an image and a feeling that I can recall in my memory at any time with a single glimpse of these shoes.

I don't save my Manolos just for special occasions, but rather wear them whenever I happen to have the desire to. Sometimes it comes on suddenly, the desire. Then I slip into the shoes, feeling the fine leather on my skin and the thin soles under my feet, and strut around my apartment in them. The only things I have on then are the shoes with the golden ankle straps and the radio. And I pray to them, just like to all other shoes, because they transport me to another time, because they make me happy, because they are able to tell stories.

As I said, for my parents, shoes are necessary commodities that have to do with dirt and impurity. I certainly was not born with any particular love for them. It seems that, somewhere between my leaving my parents' house and my first pair of high heels, I must have deviated from my native shoe philosophy.

And I want to make it clear that my adoration for shoes with heels did not begin only with the television series "Sex and the City." I already owned Manolos when Carrie Bradshaw and Don Johnson were conquering the world on espadrilles.

No, high heels have always fascinated me because, for me, they represent fearlessness and staying power. My friend Sascha is convinced that only real women aren't afraid of strappy sandals with a ten centimeter heel. If one can walk upright and secure in

them, then one radiates self-confidence; if one stumbles or wobbles back and forth precariously, then, as a woman, one paints a very pathetic picture. High heels demand courage and determination, and they're a completely new sort of women's movement, moving this way on ten centimeter heels. Maybe I find high heels so sexy because they portray an irresistible mixture of risk, foolhardiness, and elegance.

Therefore I can't understand why many women don't wear them, just because they might possibly be uncomfortable. For my father, dinner is not dinner without meat, and I think nothing of shoes with less than a ten centimeter heel. For me, everything less than that falls into the category of Birkenstock. As soon as I have high heels on my feet, my shoulders straighten up, my stomach tucks in, and when I walk in them, I finally, for once, don't look like a cowboy staggering out of a saloon reeling drunk. There's a trick to moving steadily, but elegantly, in high heels. One need only master the unidirectional Samba step: as soon as you takes a step with the right foot, simply lift your left hip.

High heels are a phenomenon. In seconds they conjure away a couple of kilograms and make every woman beguiling – provided that one has mastered said samba step. With high heels, one feels sexy without being a sex bomb. They're made for those women who have laid the "street look" aside, and who merge their self-confidence with elegance. "Shoes are like having sex. High heels are like making love," said the New York shoe salesman in whose store I had my religious experience, and I think he was right.

I have a five-level glass shelf in my living room, on which stand thirty pairs of my most beautiful high heels. My shoe shelf is my personal altar. Strangely enough, men end up standing in front of it much more often than women. They run their fingertips stealthily

over the shoes, wondering at the variety of shapes and colors. Sascha says that my quirky obsession with shoes is a trait more pathological than eccentric. He has never known anyone who would invest their entire retirement fund in shoes. He predicted to me that, as an old woman, I would have to sleep in my shoes if I didn't stop buying three pairs a week.

Three years ago I owned one hundred pairs of shoes. I counted them out of boredom one Sunday afternoon while dusting. I got a bit queasy. As I multiplied in my head the number of shoes by the average cost per pair, I arrived at the price of a medium-sized vehicle. At first I wasn't sure if I hadn't miscalculated, so, for safety's sake, I enlisted the help of a pocket calculator. But I wasn't mistaken. Instead of the many high heels, I would have been able to afford a cruise on the "Queen Mary," once around the world and over all the seven seas. Since that day, I continue to buy shoes diligently, but I don't keep track anymore.

If my mother knew that I spend so much money on shoes, she would first beat me half to death and then disown me for all time. I shall never be able to win my parents over to my new religion. A trumpet far mightier than Joshua's would have to be invented to bring about such a change. I used to throw myself down to pray in the mosque. Today I hardly pray anymore, but it's entirely possible for one to come across me bowed down on my knees – in a shoe store, as I fasten the straps of my new shoes.

Even if I can't tell my parents about my passion for beautiful shoes, with my sister Fatma I always meet with positive resonance. She wouldn't take off her Manolo Blahnik satin mules even while she vacuums. As opposed to Ablam, who doesn't want to know anything about such extravagance. A short time ago, my niece visited me in Berlin during

her holidays. She had just turned eighteen and we spent a couple of days exploring the Berlin nightlife. One evening, I lent her a pair of my high heels, and she wore them proudly. After she had left, Ablam called me, furious, and complained to me that I had driven her daughter to addiction. Since her visit to Berlin she had raved constantly about her new drug – shoes.

9. Four Weddings and a Black and Blue Eye

When I was in my early twenties my father said to me: "You need to finally find a husband. I don't care who, the main thing is that he's Turkish and a Muslim." He didn't say it directly with these words, but that's what he meant. When my father asks if I don't feel lonely, he means I should, at long last, get married. When he says that it's difficult for Germans to understand our religion and culture, he means he won't allow anyone but a Turkish Muslim into his home. That is the so-called "father tongue." I understand my father's language very well.

We were out driving in his new Mercedes. Strangely enough, we're always in the car when we discuss important topics. When my mother says: "You two go on ahead, we'll come later with your brother," then I know that it's once again time for a conversation about marriage. My father always begins the discussion by asking as casually as possible: "How old are you now?" and he watches the road the whole time. He knows, of course, how old I am, and it is, of course, a rhetorical question. Nevertheless I always answer seriously and state my current age as if I don't know why he's asking me.

I was recently reminded of these father-daughter talks when my girlfriend Julia wanted to know if I was actually supposed to have had an arranged marriage. I was a bit surprised. Less by the question than by the fact that she asked after so many years of friendship. "Yes, for four camels and a tractor, but at that time there were no camels in

Central Anatolia, and the family also didn't want to let go of the tractor because it was supposed to have been invested in the older son's bride, so I managed to avoid the situation once again, but I was severely traumatized, and now a husband in the agriculture business is simply out of the question for me." Julia looked at me in shock; I enjoyed her bafflement for a moment. Then I gave in: "That was a joke."

I must admit that now I sometimes wish my father had arranged a marriage for me. It would have saved me a great deal of bothersome searching, countless hopes, and just as many disappointments. And I would have, without wasting much time, found a husband.

At the same time, I do indeed have a valuable dowry – a German passport. "How can you be so heartless and give up your identity?" my father had complained then, after I had applied for one, and he stamped furiously through the living room. I tried to explain to him that I would live in Germany for the rest of my life anyway, that it would be easier for me to find work, and that I could use my vote to speak out strongly for the SPD,[26] the only party that supported Turkish extended families being brought together. But I could not convince him. I had only one chance to rescue the situation: "Besides, it doesn't matter what's written on a piece of paper; after all, your blood flows through my veins and my soul will remain forever Turkish," I tried to placate him. As a precaution, I didn't bring up the fact that Germany is my home, the land that I love and in which I hope one day to get married.

"I'll talk to you only when you're Turkish again," he said, insulted, marched into the yard, and lit the barbecue. He ignored me as we ate. Only once did he turn to my mother and say: "Could your *German* daughter please pass me the salt."

"Kızım," my mother whispered in my ear later, which basically means "my daughter." "I'll talk to him and he'll settle down."

A couple of weeks later – I had long since driven back to my student apartment – the telephone rang. It was my father: "I've thought about it," he said in an astonishingly quiet voice.

"Ah, yes?"

There was a short pause.

"How long does the processing take?"

"A year."

"That's a long time."

"It's gotten better, you used to have to wait three years."

"Could you get the documents for us?"

"Sure." I smiled and hung up.

Twelve months later I sat with the rest of my family in the Duisburg City Hall, where, as part of an official ceremony, we were given our certificates of naturalization, complete with a voucher for a tour of the city. When my father was called, he took a deep breath, stood up, and accepted his certificate with a swelled breast. As he swaggered back to his place, his green eyes shone belligerently. "Why do I get a voucher for a tour of Duisburg?" he asked those around him emphatically and disquietingly. "I've lived here for over thirty years and know every corner of the city. Why don't I get a voucher for the Black Forest? I've never been there." He folded the voucher four times and stuck it in his shirt pocket.

Despite the German passport, I was, of my father's four daughters, the one who was hardest for him to connect with a potential husband. Not that I was too thin or couldn't have children, no, it was because of my intractable character. Only once was he asked for my hand in marriage. After that, no family had the heart to venture inside our house.

All my girlfriends had a constant stream of hopeful suitors lined up at their doors, and that had made me a bit jealous. But it was nothing in comparison to the worry I caused my parents. My oldest sister likes to maintain that, to this day, my father hasn't forgotten the dishonor I'm supposed to have brought him.

I shall never forget this blackest of all days. It was a Sunday and the sun was shining in the Turkish village on the Aegean Sea where my parents had bought their vacation home. The sky was blue, the gulls circled hungrily above my head, and I was drinking Turkish tea out of a coffee mug. I hate those thin tea glasses, squiggled over with cheap imitation gold, but adored for their authenticity, because I always burn my fingers. So I drank my authentic tea out of a coffee cup with "I love NY" written on it, ate sesame rings and feta cheese, and watched my mother as she harvested her vine tomatoes.

Along these lines, one needs to know that my mother is constantly occupied not only with preparing something to eat, but also with planting and harvesting. It doesn't matter to her which climate zone she finds herself in at any given time. In Duisburg, it took her only one growing season to transform the rose garden, which the previous tenant had nourished lovingly for years, into a southeast Anatolian vegetable garden with runner beans, cucumbers, carrots, peppers, parsley, and pumpkins. In her garden here in Turkey she

cultivated in addition, thanks to the wonderful climate, eggplant, zucchini, and these very tomatoes.

As she plucked the blood-red fruits from the shrubs, my father came over to her, whispered something agitatedly in her ear, and disappeared again. My mother interrupted her diligent labor, sat down beside me, and said: "Kızım, a family with whom we are related is coming to visit us now. I would like it if you would wash and put on a nice dress. They're bringing their son, Ismail, with them, and your father and I think he would be an excellent match for you."

I looked at my mother and said: "Are you guys crazy? I'm not going to marry a man I don't know."

"At least have a look at him," she pleaded. After all, I would still have enough time after the engagement to get to know him better. I would certainly like him, of that she was sure, and, if not, she promised me she would send him on his way.

At this point in time, I had been living away from home for some years and had already had intensive experiences with alcohol, drugs, and men. I'd gotten alcohol poisoning from the first ten tequilas of my life and had to have my stomach pumped. My first joint was almost as thick as a cohiba and responsible for the fact that, after partaking of its charms, I lay in the gravel parking lot of a club in the Ruhr Valley screaming: "Take me to the hospital, I'm dying!"

Since then I've never again touched tequila or a joint. My first experience with a man was similarly catastrophic, but I can't seem to keep my hands off of them. I suppose I

already sensed at the time that the chapter of my life entitled "Men" would not be taken care of with a simple marriage. Of course, my mother knew nothing about all this, but to this day I ask myself: Why hadn't Ismail just called me up and arranged a date?

My father had serious misgivings from the beginning. "My daughter is obstinate like a mule. She'll send him home with one kick," he warned. But my mother didn't want to forsake me quite yet. She hoped that a miracle would come to pass and that her daughter would actually fall head over heels in love with a man she had never seen before in her life. Even if the whole thing seemed ludicrous to me, rather than have my mother once more refuse to speak to me for weeks, I preferred to do her this favor. After all, nothing could happen to me. Besides, I was also a bit curious. And thus even I would be able to enjoy a real "görücü," which effectively means "presenting oneself to the suitor."

I put on my loveliest dress and waited in the kitchen of the vacation home for my future husband. Ismail came with his parents and an aunt who had, at some point, seen me at a neighbor's house and told him about me. This sort of thing is customary in traditional families: relatives, acquaintances, and neighbors keep an eye out for suitable marriage candidates and help in seeking them out. Without suspecting a thing, I was, at the time, far and wide the most eligible bachelorette in the whole circle of family, friends, and acquaintances. I did have a reputation for being difficult, and also, of my father's four daughters, I was ranked as only third prettiest (back then my youngest sister Elif was not yet of marriageable age and so didn't count), but that didn't bother Ismail's family, because my

dowry was priceless for a Turk living in Turkey: the man who married me would, without hassle or objection, receive a German work and residence permit.

So suddenly there was a family sitting on the sofa in our house, whom I had never seen before and who had driven three hundred kilometers to appraise me as a future wife for their son. At first I poked fun at the whole thing in the kitchen, and my brother Mehmet simply remarked: "The poor guy – if he only knew who it is he wants to marry."

Somehow I felt sorry for Ismail as well. I watched through the crack in the door how he sat there and didn't say a single word the whole time. Everyone sitting in the living room knew why they had come, but no one addressed the topic. Quite a while later, Ismail's father finally put forth his request: "Allahın emriyle, Peygamberin kavliyle (as ordered by Allah and decreed by his prophet Mohammed) we wish to have your daughter Hatice as wife for our son Ismail."

I saw how my father acted as though he was surprised. He very slowly drank a mouthful from his cup and said: "I have a beautiful and intelligent daughter. She studies at the university and even recently acquired a German passport. You are not the first family to request my daughter's hand." Doctors and engineers had sat on his sofa and no one had been good enough. (That wasn't actually true, but sometimes my father helps reality along). He was very reluctant to give me away as I was, of the four daughters, his favorite girl. (That I had never heard from my father before either). "I shall speak with my daughter," he promised the family.

Now the time had come for my entrance. "Could you bring us the mocha?" asked my mother, who had joined me in the kitchen. "And when you carry it in, don't look at the cups,

fix a point on the wall. Give the guests their cups first, then your father and me, and afterwards go right back into the kitchen," she ordered. My father would discuss everything further with me once they had gone.

A queasy feeling crept up on me. I had made fun of the situation, but while I prepared the mocha, fear suddenly entered into the mix. I recognized that this was a joke only for me, but for my parents, as well as for Ismail and his family, it was very serious. As a solution to my dilemma, nothing better occurred to me than to speak to Ismail directly. Perhaps this alone would be reason enough to cause the situation to escalate?

I resolved first of all to be compliant for once, to serve the mocha, and to reserve my plan for a later point in time. After all, I didn't want to alienate anyone, least of all my father. I went into the living room with the tray and placed a cup in front of Ismail. My queasy feeling suddenly became rage: What were these people thinking, simply to come here and ask for my hand when they didn't know me? The whole situation struck me as absurd, and before I could think clearly again, the words sputtered out of me: "I hope you like it, stranger!"

My parents were shocked, Ismail's parents even more so, and my future husband looked shamefaced and helpless to his father. My performance was, of course, extremely embarrassing for my father. He reacted quickly because he sensed that I wasn't finished, and, to rescue the situation, he said: "This is my daughter Hatice. If you like, you can ask her yourselves."

For a second I was as appalled by my lapse as my parents were, but then all at once I experienced a surge of joy at my transgression. It was a revolt, my personal triumph, and

I thought of all the Turkish girls married off against their will because they didn't have the courage to rebel against tradition.

Ismail looked left and right. Finally his mother broke the silence: "Kızım, you are very pretty," she said. And Ismail's father added: "It's a bit unusual to ask you directly, but we believe that you and our son Ismail would be a very good match."

I sat down on the couch, turned to Ismail, and asked: "Why do you want to marry me?"

"Because we're a good match," he answered uncertainly.

"But you don't know me at all."

"I carry a photo of you in my pocket."

"You won't be happy with me; you'd be better off marrying a woman who won't make your life hell," I said resolutely, stood up, and went back into the kitchen.

"Obstinate like a mule." My father threw my mother a reproachful glance. To Ismail's parents he said: "Forgive me, but if it were up to me, you could take her with you right now." Shortly thereafter Ismail's family hastily said their goodbyes and left. I have never seen them again.

At the time, my sister Fatma hated me because I was not yet engaged. She had already met her true love a year earlier in a café in Turkey. "Over my dead body will my younger daughter get engaged before my older daughter," my father said furiously, when Fatma tried to persuade him. "Please, you must make an exception, or am I supposed to get married when I'm an old frump?" she whined. Since my performance in front of Ismail's family – word of which, incidentally, had spread very quickly – Fatma no longer believed

that any man would ever ask for my hand again. For my poor sister, every day that passed by on which I did not render a promise of marriage meant one more day that she had to wait for her wedding.

It was already more than half a year ago that her boyfriend's family had asked my father for her hand. "Dünürcülük" it's called in Turkish. Everything went perfectly on the day her suitor made his request. My parents, her boyfriend, Ramazan, and his parents sat in the living room, chatted about this and that, and during the first hour my sister's name wasn't mentioned one single time. I pressed my ear to the living room door and tried to hear what was being discussed within. Once in awhile I teased Fatma: "Oh, oh, that doesn't sound good, there's a problem, they don't want to pay so much for you."

"Oh, be quiet, this isn't a livestock market!" she shouted at me and executed a hectic trial run with a tray on which she balanced five empty mocha cups.

After a solid hour my mother finally came into the kitchen. "So, you can serve us the mocha now," she ordered. With a single bound, Fatma jumped in front of the gas stove, lit it, and placed the "cezve," the pot used to prepare the mocha, over the flames. After she had filled the cups, she realized that, in her excitement, she had cooked the black coffee with salt.

Here one needs to know that mocha cooked with salt is a polite way of making it wordlessly, but unmistakably, clear to a suitor that one does not want to marry him, and that he and his entire clan can please disappear immediately. Besides him, no one notices anything, and the sensitive Anatolian pride is not unnecessarily injured. He can explain to his parents later that he has changed his mind. Discretely pouring water into a suitor's shoes

functions similarly. It goes without saying that, in this case, the Turkish habit of taking off all footwear before entering a house provides a definite advantage.

In a hurry Fatma prepared new mocha and while doing so took great pains to ensure that I stayed away from the shoes. After the guests had said goodbye and left, my father walked around the house with her to ensure her consent. Of course she said yes right away. The next day my mother had a neighbor announce her visit to the family of the groom. This is commonly done so that the families can discuss whether both sides are in agreement with the promise. One arranges a date upon which the "deposit," two rings laid on an embroidered handkerchief, can be exchanged. And after all the formalities were dispensed with, Fatma was finally promised to her boyfriend.

It remained for her only to wait until I finally married. Every two weeks she called me to ask if I had, at long last, met someone. I had actually just met someone, but I didn't know yet whether I would see him again, let alone whether I would marry him. "It's not that simple to find someone. You were just lucky," I said reluctantly.

Over the course of the year my father gradually changed his mind. I don't want to know all that Fatma brought up to convince him. It must have been terrible predictions regarding my future love life that she delivered. In the end my father concluded that she would be allowed to marry if it was at all conceivable that there were a man in my life. Now Fatma begged me at least to act as if I had a boyfriend. What could I do to help her? There just simply wasn't anyone. And certainly no Turkish Muslims.

When I was in my mid-twenties, my father said, as he gazed through the windshield of his Mercedes: "There are so many Muslims in other countries." In the father tongue this means: He doesn't have to be Turkish. The main thing is that he's Muslim. Outside it was raining, and plump raindrops obscured our vision.

At this point Ablam, my big sister, had been married for a long time. Honestly, my desire to marry started to die away if I so much as thought of her absurdly elaborate wedding. It was acted out with so much pomp that everyone still speaks about it today. To be fair, one must add here that it wasn't only her fault. It was the first real wedding in our family and my father believed that the more grandiose the wedding, the less heartache he would have to endure in giving away his first and oldest daughter. My mother would have preferred to have all her four daughters marry in a mass wedding, because then she would have her peace from strange visitors, embroidered handkerchiefs, and weeks-long preparations.

Ablam's wedding took place in Turkey and, by Turkish standards, was relatively straightforward with "only" five hundred guests. But most of the relatives lived in Germany and it was too expensive for them to travel to Turkey just for the celebration.

My cousin Leyla in Duisburg married that same year and I was invited along with my family. Her wedding was also so pompous that I found it rather frightening. Before we drove to the party, we all gathered at my aunt's house. The women wore new dresses and had been to the hairdresser. Strange people constantly came and went, screeching children demolished all semblance of order in the apartment, men sat in the living room and played tavla, and dozens of women lay siege to the bedroom and the kitchen.

Suddenly the groom stood at the door with his family to have the bride released. In Turkish this tradition is called "yüz görümlüğü" and translated means "the fee one has to pay to be allowed to see the bride's face." Usually it goes very quickly, in that one symbolically pays the bride's father, but in Leyla's case, the spectacle lasted an eternity.

Before the groom entered the house, my uncle wrapped the red silk band around Leyla; according to tradition, the band is wound three times around the waist. This is an old custom meant to ensure that the bride remains connected with her family, her religion, and her new home. Leyla stood in the living room, into which her future husband's family gained no entry because, at the same time, a red band was fastened across the door frame. My uncle was now supposed to cut through the band.

He positioned his scissors to cut it and cried: "Oh, it won't cut." The first bill was handed over. Then he lifted the scissors a second time and cried: "Oh, it still won't cut." The second bill followed. And so it went a third, fourth, and fifth time until the groom, thoroughly annoyed, ripped through the band, grabbed his bride, and brought her to the car – which later cost him further bills as punishment. This is certainly not normal, but my uncle pestered the groom until he eventually gave in.

Leyla's wedding took place in the city's main hall, the second largest festival hall in Duisburg. The biggest would have been the MSV football stadium,[27] but luckily you can't rent it for Turkish weddings. We set out in all available cars, the bride and groom leading the way in the largest Mercedes. Leyla's brother-in-law hung out of the next car, eagerly capturing everything with the video camera. Before long, the parade had grown to the satisfying count of twenty cars and moved slowly forward. Tradition has it that children

repeatedly jump in front of the car of the bridal pair, whereupon the groom throws them money, clearing the way to drive further.

After a solid two hours, we finally reached the hall. "Hähnchen Roland," the roast chicken vending franchise, had already positioned a man with a mobile barbecue in front of the entrance where everyone could see him. Leyla and her groom were led into the hall, which once again took a good half hour because everyone wanted to take pictures of the two of them. It seemed to me that all the Turks in the world had gathered together. But my mother thought there were only about a thousand guests, five hundred less than there were at the Buluts' wedding, which had taken place two weeks ago. I could see through Leyla's veil that, at this point, she already looked quite annoyed. So far her wedding had had nothing to do with the most wonderful day of a woman's life. Once arrived at our assigned places, we sat down in comfortable plastic chairs. The tables were covered with wood chip paper. They wobbled and were piled high with Tupperware containers full of pickles, green tomatoes, and cabbage leaves marinated in brine, as well as large plastic bottles of Cola, Fanta, and Sprite. And outside everyone received half a chicken from Roland on a paper plate.

The bridal pair was seated on a podium with their best friends, and everyone streamed by to congratulate them. Leyla kissed the groom's mother, kissed the bride's mother, kissed the groom, kissed the groom's father. In the center, the wedding cake stood in all its splendor. In the harsh fluorescent light Leyla looked like a drowning victim, the infinite number of children who had come were making a hellish racket, and my brother

Mustafa and his friends were taking swigs of Johnny Walker, a bottle of which they kept hidden under the table.

Haydar, the Turkish wedding singer, hammered away on his keyboard and, accompanied by a band, sang covers of schmaltzy songs by Ferdi Tayfur and Emrah. When the musicians took a break, Haydar played records. The girls stormed the dance floor, throwing hair and hips in the air – filmed by Leyla's brother-in-law, who was still running around tirelessly with his video camera, recording everything that passed in front of his lens.

The video camera must have been invented by a Turk. How else can one explain their compulsion to capture every banal triviality on film? All my siblings have their own video cameras, and the worst part is that they never shy away from using them at any time, day or night. My parents own a complete set of videocassettes precisely documenting when each of their six grandchildren smile, crawl, walk, fall down, and when they use the potty for the first time. The cameras are simply always standing at the ready. And these little films are presented to everyone, whether they want to see them or not.

My brother Mustafa also owns a camera of course, but he doesn't think much of screaming children. He prefers to film his current girlfriend, who, in the films, is always either getting dressed or undressing.

After the meal followed the traditional spectacle with the money. Haydar, the singer, asked the bride to stand up and move onto the dance floor. It was time for money and gold, the most important moment for the heads of the family, because now it could be publicly demonstrated how much the bride was worth. Everyone who hung gold or money on the bride's wedding dress was announced over the microphone by name and degree of relation.

With a casual gesture, Leyla's father-in-law clipped three 500 Mark bills to her veil; a murmur went through the crowd. Unfortunately they had to return the money later. Leyla's mother-in-law added ten gold bracelets, a gold chain, and a gold ring. The bride was allowed to keep the gold; it was meant to provide the couple with financial security. Most of the time it had to be cashed in immediately after the wedding to pay off the debts incurred in paying for the wedding. Incidentally, Leyla's wedding ceremony cost a measly 30,000 Marks.

Later we all danced the "halay," the Turkish folk dance in which the howling dancers hold each other by the hand or the shoulder, trample from left to right like a herd of sheep gone wild, and bash each others' knees. At the same time, the last person in the chain waves with an embroidered handkerchief. The band plays along on the "davul" and the "zurna," a kettledrum and a wooden trumpet, two instruments that only ever appear as an inseparable pair. If you get yourself mixed up in the "halay," you must hang on, for better or for worse, until the end. If you stop too early, it becomes dangerous for all the participants. If even one dancer doesn't keep up with the complicated combination of steps, everyone in the chain falls out of step and ten people and all twenty legs fall all over one another.

"Haydi, git kızım, oyna" (Go, daughter, get out there and dance), my mother often says to me at Turkish weddings. She pushes me gently with her hand on my back and motions in the direction of the dance floor. On other occasions, she makes sure that I don't stand out too much. But she's encouraging me not because she wants her daughter to have a bit of fun too, rather because this is her chance to make mothers with eligible sons aware of me.

Although I really do enjoy dancing, I never feel completely comfortable doing it. Once, at a Turkish wedding, I experienced a mass brawl because there was a difference of opinion regarding the music. The male wedding guests were hitting each other over the heads with plastic chairs and the women went at each other with their shoes. A whole nineteen patrol cars were deployed, and because the police officers were also attacked, in the end even pepper spray had to be used.

This sort of thing never happens at German weddings. It doesn't have to degenerate into a giant brawl, but to suit my tastes they could involve a bit more than the sawing of a tree trunk. Not that I'm looking to praise Turkish wedding traditions, quite the opposite, but let's take as an example the already mentioned sawing of the tree trunk. A gnarled tree trunk lies in front of the church, and the bridal couple has to work together to split it with an old, rusty saw – a symbol for their ability to solve all problems together, regardless of how difficult they are.[28] And what do the guests do? They give the impression of being embarrassingly moved, and stand around at a loss for words. Here the whole deal with the red band wrapped three times around the bride's waist right in the middle of a throng of guests, as is practiced at Turkish weddings, is considerably more exciting and more relaxed. Or the custom of throwing rice at the bride and groom after the ceremony. This is supposed to symbolize fertility. Turks simply sit a small child on the bed of the bridal couple so that they have numerous offspring – which I find decidedly more plausible.

According to the German custom, when a young bride wants to enter her home, evil spirits don't just lie in wait in front of the door, but also under the threshold. According to old superstitions, they begrudge her her happiness. Therefore the groom carries the bride

over the threshold and protects her from these dark powers. For this purpose we have "nazar boncuğu," the blue eye, a talisman in the form of a glass bead. The eye is supposed to protect against evil and envious glances, because if we are hit by the evil gaze of someone who means us harm, it will be caught in the bead, and won't be able to do any damage. The round, blue glass bead is supposed to work the best when it's brought into the direct proximity of the one it is to protect. Incidentally, the eye is blue because, according to these beliefs, people with blue eyes can most effectively ward off the strength of evil. That's why these blue glass beads hang all over the place in Turkish households, businesses, cars, and often on a chain around one's neck.

I have two protective blue eyes, but this story is a bit sad. The one eye belongs to me, the other to a man whom I met only a short while ago. Right away I told him that for many years now I'd carried a copy of his left eye in the form of a small glass bead in the change pocket of my wallet. He looked at the clock and said that it was already late and that he had to go. I rummaged around in my handbag, searching for my wallet. "I can show it to you," I said, but he turned around and left. "But it's to ward off the evil eye," I called after him, but he had already disappeared.

As I said, Fatma was allowed to marry a couple of months after her engagement, even though I was still without a husband. She's lived in Turkey since her wedding. So now only my youngest sister Elif and I were left. My sisters named me "evde kalmış" a long time ago, the gist of which means always the last one left sitting on the bench in gym class, because Elif had also had a boyfriend for a long time. The two had met at McDonald's in Duisburg.

"Never will my youngest daughter get married before my second-oldest daughter," said my father furiously, when she asked him about the date for her wedding. Three months later we celebrated her henna night, the evening before her wedding, in the Turkish "Cooltural" Association in Duisburg. It is the night that is supposed to bless and consecrate the marriage. Elif's hands and feet were smeared with henna, a dark brown powder mixture made from the henna plant, which the Prophet Mohammed – enchanted by its fragrance – is supposed to have named the queen of all flowers. The older women sang sad songs, which were meant to bring Elif to tears over her impending departure from her family. Just to be safe, Ablam painted my right hand with henna paste as a symbol of fruitfulness and fertility. All the while knowing I can't stand the stuff. It takes months to get rid of the color again.

"Kızım," said my father when I was thirty and we were once again sitting in his new Mercedes. "Allah loves all people equally, regardless of their heritage." By this he meant that, at this point, it didn't matter a whit to him whom I married – it could even be a German – as long as I finally did it! That was five years ago.

In the meantime, my four sisters and my brother Mehmet were married. Only my younger brother Mustafa and I were left over. Mustafa moved in with his girlfriend, and a couple of weeks ago he sent me a text message: "Ey, seesta, you come to my wedding? About preesent we sapeek later. You brotha."

Ablam told me that my father had agreed to the wedding only because he was sick of always having his shoes turned around. Turkish sons and daughters always carry out conversations about weddings in the father tongue. And, in some cases, the father tongue can

be employed without using any words at all. You can't learn this language anywhere, you must puzzle it out for yourself, and shoes turned around means: "Father, I want to get married."

My parents had concealed from me the fact that their youngest child was getting married. I wonder if they were ashamed or if they didn't say anything to me so that I wouldn't be sad? And what's going on with my brother anyway? He's only just turned twenty-four. Can't he wait until his grown-up sister is married?

A couple of days ago, I was once again in the car, driving with my father. "How old are you now?" he asked as casually as possible.

"Thirty-five." I knew exactly what he wanted to talk about.

"We've renovated the old kids' room."

"Really."

"Your mother and I are getting older."

"Neither of us is getting any younger," I said.

He became impatient: "I just want you to know one thing. You can move back in with us at any time."

We avoided looking at each other.

"I've also spoken with your sister. When we're not around any more, you'll live with her." We both stared through the windshield.

10. The King of Duisburg

This time it was a cell phone that my brother Mustafa offered me. Of course, it wasn't just any cell phone. An outer shell made of real titanium, an elegant opening mechanism, an expressive design. The price of this black Nokia, almost seven hundred Euro, had left me living in want for months; I had to have it. Until one day Mustafa pulled precisely this phone out of his jacket pocket and laid it on our living room table. I grabbed at it and said "Wow, I've wanted to have this exact phone for an eternity now. Can you get me one like this too?"

"Ja, sure, no paroblem, you can have," he answered.

"And how expensive would it be?"

"Because you my seesta, 150 Oyro."

"Great. Is there also a guarantee and an invoice?"

"When ita break, my colleague fixit, and bill I parint you out at Media Markt."[29]

If my brother Mustafa didn't already exist, I would have had to invent him for this book. He is the cliché incarnate. His life is a satire on reality. Mustafa was always a bit different from my other siblings and me. Thus we always told him that he had been switched at birth.

At ten he already had the biggest mouth, cursed with the most indecent swear words in the Turkish language, promised, for an advance payment, to get the neighbor's children the football pictures they were missing from the collectable set packaged in panini

sandwiches (which, of course, he never did), and fought with his sisters. Back then he was already going with the prettiest girl on the block, but only until he found a prettier one.

Since then nothing has changed when it comes to the story of women in his life; even today he is still on the hunt for the prettiest girl, and he says that a beautiful woman isn't beautiful unless she belongs to him. But a second passion has made an appearance: football. It comes even before women, and right after cell phones. His favorite Turkish club is Galatasaray, and in the German Football League, he worships Bayern München.[30]

Mustafa is not alone in this obsession. After eating and talking, football comes first in the lives of Turks, even when most of them have never set foot on a football field. And among Turks there are just as many female as male football fans. We Turkish women love football. Even I have wild discussions with Mustafa about every game. Since I was ten, I have followed all the tournaments with breathless excitement, and I still know all the big names today: Augenthaler, Hrubesch, Briegel, Rummenigge.

At the same time though, under no circumstances, do the behinds and hairdos of the players occupy the center of my attention. For me, football is a strategic game constructed from midfield outwards, which means to trick the opposing players in the penalty area and to shoot a clean goal, without running into the offside trap. Admittedly, for a long time now I've rarely had the pleasure of watching the Turkish team play football. Our people simply play abysmally. They think a four-man chain is a type of gold jewelry, in the first half they run themselves almost to death without touching the ball once, hardly manage to get it over the center line in the second, and end up being flattened 7:0 by the opposing team.

Once they really did do well; that was the 2002 Football World Championships in Japan. They were just lucky. They suddenly seemed to grasp the idea that there was simply

nothing for a defenseman to be doing in the opposing team's penalty area and that, when he gained control of the ball in his own end, he should, under no circumstances, run blindly down the field with it, foul his own striker, and try to score a goal to become a national hero. They also grasped the fact that football is a team sport, an honest straddle is not preferable to a hook shot, and that there are no goals awarded for overrunning the opponent like a herd of wild buffalo. With all due respect, they played with a great deal of discipline during this World Championship. Even a bit like the Germans I thought: close it up at the back and wait for ninety minutes. Not for nothing did they come out third and the Germans second. With the tiny difference that, two years after this success, the Turks were still running around so full of themselves that they failed to qualify for the European Championships.

But back to my brother: shortly before the semifinal game, Turkey against Brazil in Japan, Mustafa once again contracted panini syndrome. The time for colorful stickers with portraits of team members had passed, but he convincingly claimed to have procured the last tickets for the game in Saitama stadium, even though it had been sold out for days. And within the Turkish circles he associated with he sold a lot of tickets – lots of small colorful tickets, at a hundred Euro per. He just about palmed one off on me too. I wanted so badly to see the game live, and, since I've never been to Japan, I could have combined it with a wonderful trip.

Unfortunately I didn't get the holiday time and couldn't travel. I can say only that it was luck. The other Turks were not so lucky. They booked flights and hotels and flew for hours to faraway Nippon. There it came to light that the tickets were forgeries. None of them got into the stadium.

Now, one could say: "It's your own fault." They really were bad forgeries. But you must know that Turks are always very suspicious of people of other nationalities. They would much rather trust a dodgy countryman who's already screwed them over three times than an official ticket sales office. My father, for example, voted for the FDP in the last election because the candidate for his district was Turkish,[31] where otherwise he's a loyal SPD voter and fan of Willy Brandt, like the whole family and almost the whole city. But in spite of this, Mustafa had to leave the city temporarily after the World Championships. My family has gotten used to the fact that he's always got to flee again because someone's on his heels.

Last summer Mustafa wanted to sell me a Louis Vuitton handbag. "'Cause you my seesta, eighty Oyro," he said. I wanted to know if it was real. "I lie, or what. I sawear, is real," he assured me. I bought the bag, although I had no idea where it came from. To be honest, I didn't want to know the exact details.

Mustafa curses and swears all the time and everywhere. He is convinced that everyone must believe him if he simply hangs "I sawear" onto the end of his sentences. He swears on the Koran, on the eyesight of his siblings, nephews, and nieces, and on the health of his parents. And in particularly difficult cases, as a last resort so to say, he swears on his manhood. I wouldn't like to know what sort of terrible state my family and I would be in if everything that my brother swears on a daily basis came true.

Mustafa's home is Duisburg, his family and friends live in Germany, and he has a German passport. He loves his three-series BMW, cheese buns, and his current girlfriend. Mustafa can actually speak very good German, better even than his native language. But he says that he's proud to be Turkish. With his friends he speaks "Germanish" – the language

of Turks in Germany – a mishmash of German and Turkish. If he were to speak German, he says, he would feel as if he were disguised. German is the language of the Benjamins, Maltes, and Kevins, those who live in the nicer parts of Duisburg and hate him because he's different.

He speaks a German dialect of Turkish. It is a simple Turkish, and Mustafa is the only one in the family who can't roll the "r" correctly. He says in Germanish, with a poorly rolled "r": "I'm Turkish, and if they don't have respect for my coolture, then they have paroblem with me." It is difficult to say whether Mustafa is the embodiment of failed integration or whether he's simply adapted to his circumstances.

He refuses to speak German properly. When I ask him why he speaks this Kanak German,[32] he answers: "Seesta, I'm Turkish, I have a Turkish balood, is lanaguage from Turkish colleagues and me."

I think that he speaks this way only because, as a Turk who has mastered the dative case, he would no longer be the boss of his gang. His buddies respect him because his mind is sharp as a knife, but he's still one of them. Mustafa is a pleb, a collision between Orient and Occident, the one-eyed among the blind, who is living every man's dream: football, cars, women. Mustafa is a son of this city. He is the King of Duisburg.

When I describe Mustafa, the resulting image is composed of the following aspects: exaggeratedly masculine behavior, boundless overestimation of his own abilities, BMW driver, Media Markt customer, cell phone fanatic, blond girlfriend, gelled hair, leather jacket, Adidas tear-aways, and gold jewelry. And I must confess, all of that matches my brother. When I want to tease him I call him "Musti," which, among Turks, is the common

short form for his name. He finds it uncool and, since he was eleven, doesn't react to it anymore.

He is my parent's youngest child and thus the baby of the family. To associate this term with my brother is, of course, pure euphemism. Because his son is the youngest, my father invested the most in his upbringing, and he actually should have become the son to set an example of an orderly journey through life, but somehow that just doesn't seem to have worked out. None of us knows exactly why, and so we continually satisfy ourselves with the same excuse: Mustafa was switched at birth.

He is intelligent, tall, and damned good-looking. He is the hottest thing on the streets of Duisburg, at least in the opinion of those women whom Mustafa hasn't yet dumped. However, according to Ablam, Mustafa can't run around on the streets of Duisburg at all at the moment, because he just had to leave the city again. "Because of paroblem wit colleague," he says. "Because he slept with another Turk's girlfriend," says Ablam.

I have no idea what Mustafa and his "colleagues" do all day. And I don't want to know. Sometimes he works for a subcontracting company. He seems to have enough money; his BMW rides lower and has the most expensive wheels and a stereo system with which he could provide the music for a Turkish wedding. During the day, he and his friends hang out in the "kahve," in one of the cafés for Turkish men, that can, in the meantime, be found on every corner in Duisburg. This little piece of hell with fluorescent lighting is nothing at all like what a German would imagine a nice café to be. This place is absolutely taboo for women, unless a wife is looking for her husband. Then she would look here first.

In a "kahve" the men play cards or "tavla," smoke, drink tea, and watch football. You don't meet Germans here, and if one happens to wander in by mistake, the Turks will first

look at him strangely and ask one another what the "potato" could possibly want here. However, if he asks nicely if he might join them, everyone will immediately offer him a chair.

But sometimes Mustafa and his colleagues also just stand around idly gawking. When I ask Mustafa why he and his friends stand around looking so dumb, he answers: "Is not so boring like at home. Can alaways look at broads." If anyone who doesn't fall into the category of "hot broad" looks intensely at Mustafa for more than three seconds, he takes it as a provocation and says in a threatening voice: "What you looking?"

My brother could wallpaper his room with traffic tickets. He often receives them for leaving the fog lights on his BMW on all day because he wants to show everyone who's the king of the street. And he doesn't just think it's cool to get tickets, but also to not, under any circumstances, pay them. It wasn't always that way. Only when he realized that the city administration's threats were just a lot of hot air did he stop paying them.

My father says that he doesn't understand why the German authorities have laws that they don't apply. "They threaten and threaten, and nothing happens," he complains about their lax methods. You have to hit people where it hurts: their honor and their money. In Turkey, they wouldn't just have long since taken his son's car and driver's license away, but they'd have given him a sound thrashing at the police station as well. That's the only language that these disrespectful good-for-nothings understand.

Sometimes my brother Mustafa is involuntarily funny. Like recently, when I was sitting in the kitchen and watching my mother wrap grape leaves for dinner. I must mention quickly that stuffed grape leaves with yogurt sauce has always been one of my favorite

dishes. In spite of this, however, it would never occur to me to wrap them myself, as this is an extremely lengthy and arduous procedure.

So as I sat there in the kitchen, I listened to Mustafa talking on the telephone. It became clear pretty quickly that the other member of the conversation wasn't a friend. I just got scraps of words like BMW, car tires, wheels, and Oyro. Then "amına koyarım" followed, a nasty Turkish curse. Finally he screamed into his cell phone: "I say onaly tharee words: get lost!" Not to give the impression that Turks can't count to three. I'm certain that Mustafa had inadvertently switched the "famous three words" that his girlfriend always wants to hear from him, and the two words "piss off" that he so often hears himself.

Mustafa has achieved what assimilated Turks have not succeeded at: he feels comfortable in his world, because he doesn't forcibly try to banish all that is Turkish from his life. Assimilated Turks often do this, because they feel ashamed of their countrymen who leave a negative impression on the Germans. Turks like my brother Mustafa are embarrassing to them, and they don't want to have anything to do with them. But this doesn't make them German either.

We have one of these hyper-Germans in our own family, our cousin on my father's side, Murat. He moved into a row house estate with his family and makes sure that no Turks live in the area; he drives a Volvo, he named his children Yasmin and Deniz. He took them out of school because the proportion of foreign students seemed too high to him, and he found a new institution for them.

Murat turns up his nose at unhygienic Turkish supermarkets, calls my youngest brother a hillbilly, and tries with every means available to appear different from him. In

doing so, he seems all the more absurd when he appears at our door with the *Focus* in his hand.

Mustafa says that he has only two enemies: racist Germans and Germanified Turks. In reality, if I were to judge by the number of men who stood outside my parents door a couple weeks ago wanting to "speak" with him, it's at least ten. Mustafa is convinced that they don't respect him. And that has to be punished – with fists if necessary.

Turks often think that the whole world is conspiring against them. You can't change their minds; they're convinced that everywhere and at all times injustices are being perpetrated against them. Particularly unjust are referees and the doormen at clubs. As soon as a referee makes a call against the Turkish team, he's done it only because he begrudges the Turks their victory and, of course, because he was bought by the opposing team. If Turks are not allowed into a club because they're standing in front of the door with twelve guys, the man at the door is not only a racist, but immediately a national socialist as well: "Are you a Nazi, or what?" they slander him.

My parents are happy that Mustafa has not yet gotten it into his head to go on German talk shows. He would indeed be the ideal guest because he plays perfectly to the cliché of the loud-mouthed macho. He often says things he doesn't mean just to be provocative and attract attention to himself. When it has to do with demonstrating macho behavior, it is almost exclusively Turkish men sitting on the daily talk shows. They claim, of course, that women belong in the kitchen and that German girls are sluts. They like being free to go on about sex and how many women they've slept with. The moderators think it's fantastic, the audience gets angry and answers with boos and laughter. Purpose served, ratings up.

The prototype of this macho Turk is "Playboy 51," whose name is actually Tanyu. A Turk who went through all the talk shows a while ago, portraying himself as an irresistible lady-killer. With the saying "Ah'm not called Playboy for nothing, Ah am Playboy: Playboy 51 from Reinickendorf, that's my name, man," he toured through the landscape of German television. My parents are quite afraid that Mustafa will, at some point, become "Playboy 69," that he will, at some point, philosophize about "ahnor and paride" on television, and that he'll reproduce a thoroughly negative cliché. He already thinks of himself as the irresistible fruit of the south and claims to have had at least sixty-nine girlfriends. I fervently hope that no one in television notices him. I would be ashamed.

Mustafa doesn't care whom he provokes; the main thing is, that it ends in a fight. I'm his favorite target because I give in to his provocation far too readily. A couple of weeks ago my family and I were sitting together eating peacefully, when Mustafa came into the kitchen in a bad mood and started to goad me rudely: "Ey man, you look terrible. It's no wonder that no man wants you." I laughed at him and answered: "Better not to have one than to get one like you."

Ablam saw disaster approaching and hissed at me not to get angry. But it was already too late. My brother and I abused each other fiercely, hurling the worst curses at one another. At some point my mother held my mouth shut, and Ablam tried to drag my brother into the living room. Then a word slipped out of his mouth that, although he uses it quite often, he had never said to anyone in his family: "Orospu."

I have no desire to translate it; it is absolutely the rudest word that you can say to a woman. I stormed after him and we beat each other like wild things. Ablam and my mother tried to separate us, but to no avail. After fifteen minutes it was all over, but at the end of the

battle we had bite marks, torn out bunches of hair, bruises, and nosebleeds to complain about.

Recently Mustafa called me again and told me something about iPods that he could sell me for really cheap. "Ey, seesta, good parice." I ordered three of them and said that I'd pick them up in the next couple of days.

11. Hans and Helga

At about eight o'clock in the morning the doorbell rang in my apartment in Berlin. My girlfriend Julia stood at the door. We had actually arranged to meet at noon, but the vegetables were fresher now, she explained, and held a three-page shopping list in front of my sleepy eyes. I had promised Julia that I would go shopping for Turkish groceries with her. Now I already regretted my promise. Julia always arrives everywhere early; she takes into account traffic jams, accidents, red lights, and yes, even snowfalls in summer. Nothing can surprise her. But two hours too early on a Saturday morning when you want to go shopping together, that was too much. "I just got home two hours ago," I mumbled as the alcohol shot through my bloodstream and hammered resoundingly in my head.

"Come on, get dressed," she hollered at me unmoved. "We have to hurry, I need the best ingredients, the very best." She went into the kitchen and made some strong coffee. I staggered after her. For a week now she's been planning a meal to surprise the new man in her life. She got it into her head to cook the same dishes that my mother had served us a couple of weeks ago. I had tried to convince her to change her mind: "My mother spent multiple days in the kitchen preparing that," I warned, and secretly wondered to myself why a German had to prepare a Turkish meal for her German sweetheart. Every national cuisine from Argentinean to Cypriot is mercilessly experimented with, but they neglect their native cuisine. Typically German.

But Julia would not allow herself to be persuaded. "Please. You just have to come shopping with me." She would, she declared, cook the dishes herself. "Besides, there might also be something in it for you. He's got quite a nice friend. A wonderful blond, blue-eyed friend. Tja, it's up to you if you want to let him escape." Ten minutes later we were sitting in her red Corsa and driving together to a Turkish supermarket.

I really do like my friend, but sometimes she drives me mad with her exaggerated punctuality, her perfectionism, and her obsession with rules. Last summer we spent our holiday together in a luxury hotel in Mallorca. We'd hardly entered our double room when Julia unpacked the contents of her suitcase in perfect order and hung all her clothes in the closet. While she was stowing her cosmetics in the bathroom, I ripped my bikini out of my bag, ran down the stairs, and jumped into the pool.

Normally I live out of my suitcase for the entire holiday, except for when the chambermaid or my traveling companion can no longer stand my lack of order and packs all my things into the cabinet. I never clean up, because if I did, I'd forget half of my things when I left. Everything must be lying around the room, nice and visible. On the day of departure I collect everything together, stuff it into the suitcase, and am always the first one done packing.

For me, a hotel room is exactly that, a hotel room. I sleep poorly on the first night, the sheets smell like bleach, and nothing else reminds me of home either. After twenty-four hours at the latest, for Julia, the hotel room is home. She puts things all over the place meant to make the room cozier and to give her a feeling of home. Her teddy, who came along for

the trip, sits neatly on the bed, she puts out scented candles, and takes the light bulbs out of the lamps to create a more homey atmosphere. When we're out and she wants to go back to the hotel, she says: "Come on, let's go home."

In the morning, Julia gets up early, lays out two hand towels to reserve us spots by the pool, and, while I roll myself over in bed one more time, she checks out the special offers for breakfast. Then she comes running up, impatiently throws the curtains open, and trumpets: "If the sun doesn't shine into a room, the doctor is bound to come in soon." Julia likes to use Turkish sayings that she picks up from me against me. This one I used once when she hid herself away in bed for days suffering from lovesickness.

Julia learns quickly; she's accurate, honest, punctual, reliable, hard-working, and has a healthy egoism. My mother, for example, likes Julia, even if she finds her a bit suspect. A couple of weeks ago the two of them conversed – with hands, feet, and my help translating – for quite a while. My mother wanted to know why Julia hadn't started a family yet. Julia answered that she would like to have children at some point, but, at the same time, she doesn't want to give up her career as a graphic designer.

Incidentally, this is also my view, but I wouldn't risk owning up to this standpoint in front of my mother. I know her sense of values, but also her anger, all too well, and I kept myself well distanced from this discussion.

"A woman is fused together with her family, not with her job," my mother said, scandalized. The Turkish family is one big nest. "With every marriage and the moving out of every child," she explained, "the Turkish family doesn't shrink, it grows." It is the holy duty of women to enlarge this nest and to hold it together.

My parents have very clear sets of values: they praise cohesiveness within the family, have a strong relationship to their own traditions, and insist that their children lead virtuous lives. Julia countered: "Parents must allow their children to become independent and then lead their own lives," all the while looking in my direction. She was right. To this day, my parents have no hobbies or interests of their own, with the one exception of my father's visits to the mosque. One of their children is always visiting, or they're visiting one of their children. They eat together, watch television, or go together to visit relatives. My siblings have never fully left the nest. And although they're married and have families of their own, they turn up on my parents' doorstep every day. But my mother wouldn't let herself be impressed by Julia. A mother and a wife puts the good of the family ahead of her own wishes, this was irrefutable for her.

"Your parents have given up everything for their children," Julia remarked on the way home. I asked her if she didn't sometimes toy with the idea of starting a family and just being there for her children? Privately I asked myself the same question. What would happen to me if I had children of my own?

Julia answered in the negative. That was out of the question for her. Children only when and if they were compatible with her career.

Sometimes Julia insists very rigorously on her rights as a woman. But she can't help it. Her parents belong to the generation of '68, and her mother raised her, in contrast to mine, in an antiauthoritarian manner. She learned that a woman must remain independent; I learned that a woman keeps the nest together. Julia is brash, always claims to know what's what, and often makes the blueprint of her life the measure of all things.

When Julia met my family for the first time she was very surprised. She hadn't expected them to be so Turkish, she told me later. By this she meant that my mother wore a head scarf, my father disappeared to go pray during our visit, and the furnishings looked like something out of the 70s.

I don't notice these things anymore. It's not that my father wouldn't regularly renovate and buy new furniture, but he's just stopped developing when it comes to the technicalities of home furnishing. Recently he was in the home hardware store and discovered the wallpaper with which he had wallpapered his living room thirty years ago. "Oh, how nice, they still have this," he said happily, and bought ten rolls. For me, my father is a great fan of the revival. He doesn't know that those 70s-style things that are available today are actually cult, he just gets excited when young people are also buying his favorite wallpaper.

My mother, on the other hand, doesn't care what's covering the walls, as long as her feet are nestled in something soft. So in every room she lays colorful, fluffy carpets that she always brought with her from Turkey. She doesn't even want to talk about a practical wooden floor. "I shall not be walking around on an uncovered floor," she cuts me short when I rave to her about the advantages of a parquet floor. She likes it cozy, and says: "A home has to be warm and smell of food." When her carpets are dirty, she drags them out into the yard, sprays them down with the garden hose, sprinkles detergent over them, and scrubs them until they're clean again.

My mother loves landscapes of seats, but she loves accessories more. Therefore, embroidered pillows of all sizes and colors cover the three-piece suites, crocheted doilies lie on the tables, and lighted picture frames preside imposingly over everything.

Once Julia invited my parents over to her house in order to, as she said, repay them for the many times they had had her over. She wanted to know what I thought of her cooking something typically German for my parents. She had already put together a menu that was to consist of three courses: a hearty potato soup with a variety of added ingredients as an appetizer, home-style stuffed cabbage as the main dish, and for dessert, red fruit jelly with vanilla sauce. "Forget it," I said, "my parents aren't that enthusiastic about experimentation." Instead I offered to prepare for her a few of my parents' favorite dishes. My mother praised Julia's cooking, politely admired her apartment, and said at the end of the evening: "But next time you'll come back to our house."

She told me the next day that she found Julia's apartment uncomfortable and cold, that my friend didn't have a home, but rather a big dog house, and that the furniture was impractical. She didn't mean it in a nasty way, more out of pity. I've never told Julia this because she invested so much time and money in that apartment when she moved in. She had the hardwood floors renovated, bought herself a very expensive sofa, and a kitchen table from a furniture designer whose last name sounds like a brand of pricey German car. In her work room she has a desk with an integrated computer mount, and she sleeps in a bed whose seven-zone latex mattress with a vertical ventilation system to combat heat accumulation cost three times as much as the bed itself.

Julia's apartment is distinguished by a certain emptiness: light, airy spaces, populated with natural materials conducive to her need for harmony. The furnishing is reduced to the essentials.

By comparison, a walk through my family's living room is a journey through another world, if not another universe. While it's an umbrella, aspirin, and an appointment calendar that are never missing from Julia's apartment, my mother can't live without her handheld vacuum and her pressure cookers.

The center of our living room is dominated by a wooden table with numerous chairs, all of which my parents brought with them from Turkey. There is easily enough space for twelve people *around* it, and a whole roasted lamb *on* it. It has always been the lynchpin of our lives, and to this day nothing has changed. When my parents want to discuss something with us, they call us to this table. My mother packed travel provisions here before we set off for Anatolia, and my father arranged the travel documents and receipts. I did my homework and made my first potato stencils on it, and at Easter we blew the yolks out of eggs with the neighbor's children. I filled out my family's naturalization documents on this table, and a couple of weeks ago Ablam sewed my niece's Fasching costume here.[33] I don't know what we would do without this table. It is always loaded up with some junk or other, and if we want to eat at it, we must clear it off first.

On Julia's kitchen table there stands a single designer bowl filled with water in which scented candles drift back and forth. She would probably suffocate in the comfy chaos of my parents' apartment.

It didn't take long before Julia and I reached the Turkish supermarket. After all, at this hour, the streets are still empty. Only the street cleaners were already out and about. While the vegetable vendor looked at us in bewilderment, because he himself had just begun to arrange the displays, Julia dug her shopping list out of her bag. I greeted him cordially in Turkish, and my friend pulled a pen out of her bag, unfolded the list, and exclaimed happily: "So, shall we?" She ordered five hundred grams of eggplant, two hundred grams of tomatoes, and two onions, and made three check marks on her list. The salesman grinned mockingly.

"Julia," I said, "with Turks you don't buy vegetables by the hundred grams, you can't get half a watermelon, and feta cheese doesn't come in slices." Turks also don't have any prepackaged meals, and they certainly don't sell half loaves of bread. "But I don't need any more," said Julia resolutely and ordered thirty grams of parsley, and a clove of garlic.

I nodded at the salesman, and he rounded the vegetables up to an even kilo, put a bunch of parsley into a shopping basket, and asked: "Five-kilo or ten-kilo bag of onions?" I answered: "We'll pass on the onions and the garlic." – "No!," cried Julia indignantly, and looked at me reproachfully. I calmed her down by promising that we would drive by Edeka to buy loose onions and garlic.[34] She noted this carefully on her list.

Julia and I, or German and Turkish, have differing interpretations of the word "no." Julia and the Germans say "no" and mean "no." On the contrary, I and the Turks mean "no," and say "we'll see," "maybe," "I have lots to do," "my parents are coming this weekend," or "I'll get back to you on that." In this respect Julia's got it a lot easier; she gets by without any excuses.

Julia is a Helga. At least, that's what my mother calls her. Only, of course, when she's not within hearing range. Just the same as my mother calls my best male friend Sascha "Hans." My mother says that Helga would be a very good match for Hans, and she wants to know why I haven't set them up yet. They would make such a wonderful couple. It wouldn't do any good to explain to my mother that the simple fact that both my friends are blond and German doesn't automatically mean that they'd work as a couple. Then she'd look at my father with a smirk, and say: "I fell in love with your father only after we had already had four children."

I met Sascha a couple of years ago at a party. In the kitchen, an intense political discussion was raging over glasses of red wine. Sascha was the only one in the group drinking beer and whose gaze was fixed outright on my low neckline. That and the fact that he was blond made him likeable from the beginning. I tried to flirt with him and promptly received contemptuous looks from the others because I had no desire to save the world on this particular evening. Apparently he was feeling the same way, because after half an hour, he put his empty beer bottle on the table and said: "So, I'm done here, shall we go?" I was a bit surprised and answered: "I'm going to make another round, just to see who's still here," and by that I actually meant "no."

German men have a curious way of flirting. Either you don't notice any of it (like it was for me with Sascha at first), or they go very directly – and not always elegantly – to the point. They don't say anything, they don't smile, and they would certainly never whistle. They only watch covertly when they find a woman attractive. And when the woman takes the initiative herself, they take flight.

When all is said and done, it didn't work out with Sascha and me either. On our third date he told me very clearly that he wasn't in love with me, but valued me very much as a person, and therefore would like to offer me his friendship. I really didn't want to know that much detail. But, we actually did stay friends. With a Turkish man, such a situation would never arise in the first place, which doesn't always mean that it's better. On the one hand, Turkish men are much more marriage-minded than Germans, but, on the other hand, when a woman doesn't appeal to them, they don't linger with extensive explanations. At the same time, their rebuffs are always graciously packaged. Most of the time they use the excuse that, unfortunately, they're already in a relationship and therefore must pass with a heavy heart. Julia calls this lying, but it actually has more to do with getting out of a situation quickly, politely, and directly.

With German men, you feel, as a woman, as if you were invisible. You can sit for hours in the park, or walk alone through museums, but very seldom will you be approached. In Turkey it doesn't take ten minutes. I admit that it's sometimes rather wearisome when men follow you for fourteen blocks, call out "Did it hurt when you fell from heaven?" and plague you until you cough up your phone number or accept their invitation to coffee. But it's still better than being ignored.

Sometimes I wonder about German men and ask myself where all their testosterone has gotten to? Or how to explain them not giving a woman so much as a glance on the street, not to mention a noncommittal smile?

Turks take every opportunity to flirt and, preferably, do so when dancing. They're suddenly seized by the desire to dance, and, whether men or women, they'll toss a couple

"bellybuttons," as we would say in Turkish. Germans often find this embarrassing. It's no rarity that one of my Turkish girlfriends climbs up on the living room table to give a belly dance performance. While German children played "Mensch ärgere dich nicht,"[35] my siblings and I let our bellybuttons gyrate to Turkish music. For Turks, dancing means flirting and conquering. Even when dancing, Germans intentionally keep themselves under control. They either don't dance at all and just watch, or they move spasmodically with a rigidly fixed countenance. And should there be eye contact with a woman, they immediately begin a screaming conversation on the dance floor.

My brother Mustafa is a prime example of how uncomplicated it is for a Turkish man to approach a woman he finds attractive. He met his current girlfriend in a café, where she was sitting alone reading a newspaper. Mustafa saw her, went to her table, put on his best smile, and said: "You baleev in love at firast sight, or I should come by agen?"

"So, now I need tomato paste," said Julia and glanced searchingly over the shelf. "Let's buy the fruit first," I advised, but she was of a different opinion. "Tomato paste is next on my list!"

Julia is meticulous in everything she does, even if she's cooking soup. If her recipe requires, for example, fresh lemongrass, she drives through Berlin for as long as it takes to find it. She would never once think of replacing it with something else or of leaving it out altogether. If my friend were to cook for more than four people, she would never simply double the quantities given in the recipe. She prepares the dish twice so as not to compromise the consistency.

I very seldom cook. And when I do, then without a recipe, without a measuring cup, and most certainly without lemongrass. This I got from my mother. She taught me to do without aids when cooking, which leads to my one-person table holding a meal big enough for an entire extended family by the time I'm done.

Like my mother, I would never think of making a shopping list. Unlike Julia, every facet of whose life is listed: call-back lists, lists of people to call, shopping lists for the drug store, the supermarket, the organic store, the butcher, and the baker. Lists of errands to do to get ready for the holidays and the attractions she absolutely has to see. A list of attractions to see should she have time left over at the end of the trip and a list of attractions that she absolutely doesn't want to visit because she's already seen them. She compiles lists for the doctor of acute and precautionary examinations, lists of movies in the theater and available to rent that she definitely wants to see. The only list that Julia hasn't yet drawn up is one of her male acquaintances. This would at least be a sensible list for once. But she finds that tasteless. I must admit that Julia's infected me a bit with her list-madness. For a couple of months now, I've also kept a list that comprises my entire wardrobe, as well as my shoes. And I confess – I find it quite practical.

In any case, Julia worked through her shopping list according to the order given by the recipe. It took a solid two hours before she finally had everything she needed. Luckily, I was able to dissuade her from buying olives and hot peppers piecemeal. "I'll buy what you don't need from you," I assumed the burden. We stowed the plastic bags into her Corsa, drove to Edeka, and she skillfully jockeyed the little car into a parking spot on the other side of the

street. The light had just turned red when we reached the crosswalk. "Come on," I exclaimed and tugged on her sleeve, "there's no one coming." But Julia would never cross on a red light, even when far and wide there were no cars to be seen.

For me that's incomprehensible, especially given what I'm used to in Izmir and New York, where people look at you strangely if you stop for a red light. It's impossible to convince Julia to abandon this German idiosyncrasy, because she does, I admit, have a good reason for it. "I don't want to set a bad example for children," she says with a rebuke in her tone. "But you're the only one who stops and waits," I call to her from the opposite sidewalk. Even mothers with children sometimes ignore the red lights to reach a street car in time. However, I don't tell her that they're mostly Turkish mothers.

Julia is a wonderful friend, perhaps because she has these prototypical German mannerisms that seem so quirky and adorable to me. At the same time, she doesn't want to hear how typically German she is sometimes. For example, Julia can't be too exuberantly happy, not even when she wins the lottery. A couple of years ago she had four numbers right and received a sum, the magnitude of which she's concealed from me to this day. If I ask her, she answers, "One doesn't talk about religion and money." A Turkish saying, which, of course, she got from me. At the time, we went together to get the ticket checked at the lottery office. When I heard that she'd won, I screamed with joy and hugged her excitedly. But for Julia, my rambunctious happiness was embarrassing. "It's great," she parried sheepishly. How else was I supposed to have reacted? Simply act as if I wasn't pleased?

Turks have to show their feelings, and oftentimes they manage to do this without any words at all. Turkish body language makes it possible to reach an agreement with a conversation partner without saying a single word to one another. In order to say, for example, "yes," we bend our heads forwards towards the breastbone; for "no," we direct our heads backwards while raising our eyebrows. If Turks shake their heads from right to left, it doesn't indicate the same thing as the German "no," but rather "I don't understand you." If one spreads the arms and shoulders to the side, that means "that's not familiar to me." A little pat on your conversation partner's shoulder means "I trust you."

During the summer in Turkey, old men often sit in front of the tea houses. The blistering heat makes them lazy, so lazy, in fact, that they're happy to be able to manage without words. They kiss cheeks, lower heads, spread arms, move hands, tip shoulders, lift feet, and make accompanying noises. Turks enrich their dialogue with sounds so as to require even fewer words for an agreement. A "he, he" sounds like mockery but means only a twofold "yes." An unequivocal "no," which is very seldom used, sounds like "tchik."

On that Saturday, when Julia wanted to conjure together a fiery menu for her new boyfriend, I gave a very definitive "tchik, tchik" over the phone. Not that I hadn't expected her call, at the most I was surprised that it came so late. "It tastes horrible," she cried into the phone, "please, you must help me!"

She had seasoned all the dishes with so much "pul biber" that she was spitting fire just from sampling them. I had forgotten to warn her that, although the powerful, dark orangey-red spice has a fragrance like harmless paprika, you get tears in your eyes just from

smelling it. If you rub the simple, dried kernels between your fingers, you can't easily get rid of the reddish color. Even my mother, who always uses a lot of spice, can make a hundred grams of "pul biber" last for half a year. Julia had used a hundred grams for one dinner.

But that wasn't the only thing that had gone wrong: of the six planned courses, Julia had just now finished three. "Having a Turkish friend isn't enough to make one able to cook Turkish food," I joked on the phone. "But don't worry," I said casually, "I'll help you."

I drove back to the Turkish supermarket, bought stuffed grape leaves, filo pastry rolls with feta cheese, yogurt, and three other appetizers. Shortly before the stores closed, I ran over to the other side of the street to buy another bottle of prosecco in the German supermarket. This I wanted to drink with Julia so that she could relax a bit before her date. And finally I went to my favorite kebapcı Mesut and got two lahmacun, two portions of vegetable kebab, a salad, and some freshly baked bread – now absolutely nothing else could go wrong!

A half hour before her date was scheduled to arrive I stood breathless, and with multiple shopping bags, at Julia's door, and I said with an ominous look: "You'd better just pray that his blond friend is single." When the doorbell rang, I took off, disappearing into thin air.

She called me the next day, well after noon. "It was a wonderful evening," she raved, "and my new boyfriend was thrilled with more than just my culinary artistry."

12. Ayşe Loves Hans

Stefan and I had been together for a year and were already living together. Except for my brother Mustafa, who had tried to sell Stefan a car radio, no one in my family had ever seen his face. At first, I found that just right. But then – it was on a Sunday, and I was sorting my shoes – the request came suddenly from Stefan himself: "I would like to meet your parents."

It came as a surprise to me, because none of my boyfriends had ever wanted to be introduced to my family. I too gave the topic a wide berth and had no intention of changing that. I loved Stefan, but a visit to my parents would have led to our lives being turned upside-down within a week. My mother would either have immediately begun the wedding preparations or tried to talk me out of the relationship if Stefan didn't strike her as being good enough to be her son-in-law.

We had met each other in a pub in Duisburg where he worked as a waiter to finance his studies and I drank to forget my frustrations with university. At the time I was studying business administration because I thought that one couldn't go wrong with a commerce degree. Besides that, the course of studies is relatively short, but the lectures on macro- and microeconomics, as well as accounting, bored me more and more.

If this blond, German man hadn't continued to put sparkling wine (people didn't drink prosecco in Germany yet) on the bar without being asked, probably none of this would have happened.

In any case, a year later I wouldn't have been faced with the awkwardness of having to explain to him why I didn't want to take him to meet my parents. Most men whom I'd met before Stefan were very happy with the fact that my parents, and above all my brothers, knew nothing of their existence. They didn't believe me that the male members of my family were completely harmless; they harbored abstruse fears that my father would set my brothers on his daughter's lover in order to restore the family's honor. That might sound over-anxious and clichéd, but it did actually happen – just not in my family. Although I constantly assured them that my father treasured nothing so much as his peace and quiet and that my brothers were about as dangerous as two puppies, they remained skeptical – and never got to know my family.

Of course it happened every once in a while that German boys fell in love with Turkish girls. At first the love was secret, and if it became more serious, then one gently broke the news to the parents that one was thinking of getting married. In no way does this mean that one necessarily gets into trouble with the fathers or the brothers. The important thing was the promise that the future husband would convert to the Islamic faith. To this day, this has placated every Turkish father because he's proud of the fact that his daughter has shown an unbeliever the true path. In the Koran it states that it is the responsibility of every Muslim to proselytize members of other faiths. Allah forgives the past sins and ill deeds of whoever converts to Islam, and the proselytizers are rewarded with paradise.

"My father will insist that we get married right away," I said to Stefan, as I wiped my shoe rack. As a precaution I kept from him the fact that our living together would also end

immediately and that I would have to move back into my parents' house until the wedding. Then there would be no going back, because, when it comes to choosing a husband, my father will tolerate only one attempt. If Stefan and I ever broke up, every man that came after him would only ever be second choice. For the rest of my life he would reproach me that he has a daughter who falls in love at the drop of a hat, and he would take every opportunity to compare the other man with Stefan. So the introduction to the family had to be well-considered.

I did not, however, conceal my more significant concerns from Stefan. "We'll never be able to get married in a church," I said, and reminded him that his mother would be very sad when she learned that a church ceremony would not be possible. But Stefan was undeterred, even when I pointed out that our children would never be baptized, that he wouldn't get any presents from my parents at Christmas, and that he would have to, over the next many years, prepare kilograms worth of barbecued meat in my father's yard. It didn't help; he insisted on meeting my parents.

I had nothing left, and I grasped at the very last emergency anchor: "You must convert to Islam, and that means you'll have to be circumcised," I said. "There's no way around that. For my father, an uncircumcised man is out of the question as a son-in-law."

Stefan was silent. He hadn't counted on the hurdles being so high. He knew that I had never introduced a man to my parents before, but he had thought that was owing to the fact that my previous relationships had been of a more superficial nature. To him, a visit to my parents was a declaration of love, assurance that I was serious about it this time.

I suggested to him that I first introduce him to my siblings, the two who lived in Germany. For a long time he'd known them only from stories and photos. He agreed, and we invited Ablam and Elif to our apartment in Duisburg. Stefan bought plum cake, I made coffee, and the visit proceeded without complication. My big sister told embarrassing stories about my childhood, and the word marriage was not once spoken.

Then we traveled to Turkey together so I could introduce him to my third sister. I arranged our trip to coincide with the small time window when my parents would definitely not be there. To recuperate we spent the day lying by the pool in a luxury hotel in Çeşme, and to eat we often went to our sister.

One evening we were sitting in her yard, and shortly after the appetizers Fatma asked if we'd already set a date. She didn't mean a date for the wedding, but rather a day when I wanted to acquaint Stephan with my father. Which inevitably meant the same thing. "We don't want to get married yet," I answered. "He knows that you're living together; Ablam told him a couple of weeks ago. He's waiting for you to tell him," she explained. "What are you waiting for?" she said. "Father just bought a new Mercedes; his mood will never be better."

I had hot and cold shivers running down my back. Now I had no choice – I had to introduce Stefan to my father, as soon as we were back in Germany. I knew now that my father knew, and it wouldn't have taken long for him, in turn, to find out from Ablam that I knew that he was waiting for me to tell him about it. I would have been able to ignore the fact that he knew that I knew, but that would have meant that, every time I visited, he would have let me know in the father tongue that he knew.

On our last day in Turkey Stefan and I sat on the beach, drank beer out of the can, and watched the fishermen return to the harbor with their boats and their nets full to bursting.

"Will he like me?" asked Stefan.

"Of course, if you agree to be circumcised."

He was silent for a moment, looked out at the ocean, and asked: "Who would do it?"

"The village imam circumcised my brothers, but you could go to the hospital," I said and paused. "It has its advantages from a medical standpoint too," I added.

He was quiet for another moment, then said,

"Good, I'll do it."

On the flight back I told Stefan how we had celebrated "sünnet düğünü," my brother Mehmet's circumcision festival, many years ago in our village. He was five years old and looked really cute in his robe embroidered with hundreds of sequins, the turban-like cap, the red sash, and a plastic scepter in his hand. All the while he sat on my uncle's shoulders and curiously observed the colorful bustle around him. The whole village was afoot, and accompanied him with "davul" and "zurna," the drum and wooden trumpet, up to our house. My sisters and I waved Turkish flags, and as Mehmet balanced on my uncle's shoulders, the whole village cheered for him.

At home, my brother was placed on a sort of throne, on which he looked like a little king. At first he continued to laugh up there, until my father laid him on the decorated bed and pulled down his Superman underwear. Then the Imam got down to business. He took the foreskin between his fingers, held it together at the top, positioned his knife, and before the eyes of all the relatives, quickly carried out the cut. Now Mehmet stopped laughing, the

Imam held the piece of skin in the air, my brother howled, and everyone yelled "maşallah," which means "as Allah wished it." Afterwards Mehmet was bandaged up, and a week later he was back outside playing with his friends.

"In our culture, a man counts as a real man," I said to Stefan, "only when he's been circumcised." As a reward for bravery there were, at least, lots of presents. And if he wanted, for his circumcision, I could find him a sequined General's uniform in his size. He went a bit pale around the nose when I told him that the Imam had conducted the circumcision without anesthetic. But he didn't have to worry, I added. Those times are long past.

For all intents and purposes it didn't matter to me if Stefan was circumcised or not, and, of course, I wouldn't have sent him packing if he had remained uncircumcised. But it was just a little cut, and it equaled a gesture of international understanding.

For his part, Stefan had introduced me to his parents after we had been together for just eight weeks. He invited me to the family's traditional Easter breakfast. His parents lived in a huge, gorgeous house on the edge of Duisburg, surrounded by a yard as big as my grandfather's wheat field in Turkey. As we stopped in front of the door, I felt a bit like Cinderella and inevitably wondered why Stefan had to finance his studies by working in a pub. Later I found out that by doing this, Stefan wanted to prove both to himself and to his parents that he could earn his own money.

As we drove up the driveway, a giant dog ran barking up to the car. Stefan got out; I stayed in the car. And I would have preferred to have stayed there forever, because I had never imagined such a large family watchdog. Since I was bitten by a dog when I was six

years old, I've had a panicky fear of dogs. Castor, that was the animal's name, was obviously very happy to see Stefan; he jumped up on him and licked his face. "Come on," called Stefan, "he won't do anything." With a pounding heart – not just because of the dog – I got out of the car.

At that moment the front door opened, and Stefan's mother came out to meet us. She was elegantly dressed, had freshly set blond hair, the same blue eyes as Stefan, and she laughed amicably to me. I immediately felt drawn to her.

"Hello, I'm Hatice," I said, and shyly handed her the Easter bouquet that Stefan had bought. So that I didn't do anything wrong, I had asked him to take care of the flowers. "It's nice to meet you. Please come in," she answered and led us into the living room. There Stefan's father was sitting on the sofa reading the newspaper. He reminded me a bit of my father, who also always sits on the sofa so engrossed in his reading, only in my father's case it's his Islamic tear-away calendar. When Stefan's father saw me, he stood up politely to greet me. Then I could see how tall and athletically built he was. Stefan must have inherited his stature from him.

"Hello, it's nice to meet you," he said also and offered me his hand.

"The pleasure's all mine," I answered, and thought how I had always found it horrible when people answered with "the pleasure's all mine." But honestly, no better answer occurred to me, except for maybe "you're just as good looking as your son," and somehow that struck me as inappropriate.

Stefan sat beside me and took my hand. This confused me a bit, and I quickly pulled my hand away. A Turkish son would never exchange open gestures of tenderness with his

wife or fiancée in front of his parents. That is absolutely taboo. Likewise, it's also taboo to kiss in public, which I would never do, unless a man surprises me very suddenly with a kiss. On this point I'm very Turkish.

Stefan's father made an effort to approach me and told me that, a number of years ago, he and his wife had taken a vacation to Turkey. He raved about Pamukkale, where they had seen the white travertine terraces, which, from far away, looked as though they were covered in snow. He told me about the steaming thermal springs and about the stalactite caves. "Yes, Turkey is a beautiful country," I said, because nothing better came to me.

While his father described to me further highlights of my homeland, Stefan's brother Michael came in. We greeted each other and seated ourselves at a table set for breakfast. Stefan's mother had put dainty yellow tulips and a couple of pussy willow branches in a vase, hung painted eggs on them, and decorated the table festively. We spent the day with Stefan's family, in the afternoon we ate cake, afterwards we all went for a walk together, and in the evening his mother served the Easter lamb – a roast cooked to tender perfection. We sat together until late in the night, drank cognac, and Stefan's father, who was already a bit drunk, continued to regale me enthusiastically with his experiences in Turkey.

I felt very comfortable, although it struck me how different things are at our house. While my mother is constantly running to the kitchen to serve new food and drink, Stefan's mother sat on the sofa, quiet and serene, and chatted with us. And where my father would bombard my friends with questions about their careers and backgrounds, Stefan's father had chosen a neutral topic that he assumed might interest me, and he asked as few personal questions as possible. For me, knowing only the lively disorder of the constant comings and

goings within my family, it was unusual to observe the ordered lines along which everything ran here.

And then finally the big day came on which I wanted to solemnly introduce Stefan to my parents. On the way there I told him agitatedly about my father, who had passed on to me not only his name, but his Turkish soul. I reported that he was a very loveable man with a big heart, only it was sometimes difficult for him to show it. He is a bit obstinate, and there are even people who are afraid of him. But fundamentally he's very generous and – this I particularly love about him – a fantastic story teller. It used to be my siblings and I who had to listen for hours to the old stories from his village, and later it was our German friends and neighbors. In the meantime, the demand has abated a bit, because there's hardly anyone left who doesn't know his stories.

It's only the story about how he got his name that he continues to tell everyone. "Akyün," I explained to Stefan, "when translated, means 'pure wool,'" I could already tell the story in my sleep, I'd heard it so often from my father. "Earlier, Turks didn't have family names. In order to change this, officials from the cities came to the country. They went through the Anatolian villages and ceremoniously gave everyone a last name. An official also came to my father's village, and everyone gathered together in the marketplace. My grandfather arrived too late, because he still had to take care of his herd of sheep. It was winter and he was wearing a white woolen pullover that my grandmother had knit for him. When he finally arrived at the marketplace, one of the villagers called out: 'Here comes Talip,' because that was my grandfather's first name, 'the pure wool.' Everyone laughed,

but the official took his countryman seriously, and bestowed the name Akyün upon my father's family."

"Nice story," said Stefan. "And what is there to tell about your mother that I don't know yet?"

Up until this point, Stefan knew only my mother's cooking, which I had brought to him in containers from my visits to my parents. I had indeed already told him about her culinary artistry, had reported the fact that she wears a head scarf and is always right, but I didn't want go into too much detail, because I wanted to acquaint Stefan only gradually with my family's idiosyncrasies. "My mother has a sharp tongue, her temper is known throughout the city, she spends most of her time in the kitchen, and for a Turkish woman she's very disobedient," I said. I didn't know how my father reconciled this with his Turkish honor, but she had always worn the pants in our house. Somehow the two seem to have reached an agreement that my mother would make all the decisions, but, in front of the relatives, they would act as if my father were the man of the house. It seems to work; after all, they've been married for almost fifty years.

I told Stefan that my mother could come across as being completely enraged, at least, when one hears her rant. She never gets violent – at most she'll dole out a few slaps – but when she reprimands her children it sometimes sounds like she's raving. "I'll break all your bones," she'll say, for example. When I speak German for too long with my siblings, she blusters: "may bumble bees sting your tongues." And when we swear, we hear: "I'll rip your mouths apart." Sometimes she gets very angry, and then she says: "May Allah take your lives from you." But she doesn't mean it like that.

While I related all this, we were getting closer to the street where my parents lived. As we stood in front of the house I suddenly felt queasy. What if my father didn't like Stefan, regardless of whether he got circumcised or not? What if he disappeared in the middle of the conversation to go pray and stayed away until we were gone?

Stefan looked stunning in the suit he had bought for the visit. Being one meter ninety, he filled it perfectly; his hair shone in the autumn sun, and his whole face was radiant. In his hand he held a family pack of Ferrero Rocher. Ablam had called us and said that we were to bring my mother only the round Rocher chocolates. "Under no circumstances Mon Cherie or Ferrero Kisses," she yelled into the phone. The one contained alcohol, and therefore would immediately land in the garbage, and she could take the kisses the wrong way. Absolutely nothing could go wrong.

Stefan rang the doorbell, and a sound resembling a fanfare resounded. My father seemed to have changed the bell. On my last visit the doorbell had still chirped like a lovely little bird. My mother opened the door at almost the same moment. Of course she had been watching us; the living room curtains were still moving. Stefan offered her the round Rochers and said: "Meerrhabba." I had taught him the greeting in the car. My mother furrowed her brow and answered: "Gooda day," she shook his hand and pulled him into the house. In the hallway she pointed to his shoes and said: "Shoe you take off," which Stefan obediently did. "Come," my mother said then and led us in the direction of the living room. Through the frosted glass window in the living room door I could already recognize the silhouette of my father. My mother opened the door, and a bright light flowed out. Even after we had entered the living room, my father took no notice of us. He placidly read to the end

of the page on his Islamic tear-away calendar. He did not look up until my mother had cleared her throat loudly, threw Stefan a cursory glance, took me in his arms, cried "Kuzuum," and kissed my eyes effusively.

In a loud voice Stefan said "Meerrhabba," but my father steadfastly ignored him.

"Baba, this is Stefan," I said when I could finally extricate myself from his embrace. "He he," he said and once again pressed me to him. So that the two men could sit beside one another on the sofa, I quickly stepped over to my mother. Stefan was almost two heads taller than my father. "Akyün," my father finally said, and shook Stefan's hand; Stefan scrunched his face into a grimace "autsch."

My father gestured towards the couch. Stefan didn't move. "Sit down," I said to Stefan and considered how I would be able to maintain the conversation when my mother asked: "You likes Baklava?"

"Oh yes, very much," he answered, although he actually hated the "sweet mushy stuff," and the last time he'd eaten it had sworn never to eat it again. My mother stood up and disappeared into the kitchen. Now the three of us sat there in silence.

"What you work?" asked my father suddenly. Stefan was a bit surprised and looked at me. "He's studying," I answered, and Stefan added "electrical engineering." For as long as I can remember, my father has wished for an engineer as a son-in-law. For months he had tried to set me up with a distant relative who studied mechanical engineering in Munich. He found it very practical to have an engineer in the family who could give him a hand with repairs. But at this point an auto mechanic and a Turkish official had to suffice as his sons-in-law.

"Electrical engineering," he repeated, and smiled contentedly.

My mother came back with a plate of Baklava in her hands and placed it on the table. I was relieved. As long as she is there, his interrogation will certainly turn out to be more congenial.

"My daughter very good daughter; I always much love," he said and looked at me proudly.

"Yes, very," answered Stefan.

Silence.

"Earn enough money?" he asked.

"It's adequate."

"You certainly very hungry," my mother interrupted and placed four dessert plates on the table.

"Baklava we eat when a beautiful day," she said and disappeared into the kitchen again to get the tea.

My mother must have stood in the kitchen the entire day in order to prepare the honey pastry. For one tray, twenty-five gossamer-thin sheets of pastry must be rolled out, and before they can be layered, the spaces in between must be filled with finely chopped nuts. Afterwards the whole thing must be doused with sugar water a dozen times until the pastry and the nuts are saturated. Baklava is the crowning achievement of sugary Turkish bakery, and it requires so much time and patience that even my mother very seldom prepares it.

"What father and mother work?" my father inquired further.

"My mother is a housewife, and my father works in a bank."

Silence and smiles.

My father placed a piece of baklava on Stefan's plate and said: "Afiyet olsun, Turkish bon appetit."

Contented silence.

We chewed our baklava; Stefan mumbled politely between bites: "Hmmm, very delicious."

After a while, my father laid his fork aside, reared up as well as a man who's one meter sixty-eight tall and sitting on a sofa beside a man who's one meter ninety can rear up, and asked sternly:

"Oğlum (my son), can you provide my daughter?"

"Baba," I cried and looked to my mother for help.

"You like?" asked my mother and filled the plate anew.

Suddenly my father stood up, left the living room, and stayed away for a while. For a moment, time seemed to stand still.

"You see, everything's going really well," Stefen whispered to me.

"Nothing is going well, he went to pray," I hissed confusedly.

But I was wrong. A short time later my father was back with a silver bowl of dates in his hand, which he placed on the table. "Please, try," he said and offered Stefan the fruit. This was a sign he was relaxed. My father always keeps a package of dates hidden away in the cabinet for very special occasions. He says, "a house without dates is poor."

An hour later I stood in the kitchen with my mother and observed as my father showed Stefan photo albums. Me as a child, my father as a young man, my mother as a bride, vacations in Turkey, my sisters' weddings, and all his cars. Later they talked about football, and in the process my father wanted to convince him that the Turks were not only better football players than the Germans, but also better than the Brazilians and Argentineans too. They just never got the chance to prove their abilities because all referees rule against the Turks.

"Yes, that's very unfair," said Stefan gravely.

Four weeks later we once again turned onto my parents' street. In the meantime, Stefan had been circumcised in the hospital under a local anesthetic. After a week the wound had healed, and we could fool around again. The news of his circumcision had spread through my family like a message passed between children playing "telephone." I told Ablam, Ablam told my mother, and she told my father.

As we turned off the street, my mother was already waiting at the door to greet us. She had dressed up; she was wearing Ablam's Kenzo head scarf and had, as an exception, fastened the ends behind her head with a golden needle. Her black eyes gleamed. "Hoşgeldin," which basically means "come happily," she called to Stefan, and locked him into a hug with a long drawn-out "Ooğluuum" (my son). I watched in amusement how Stefan, with cut flowers in one hand and round Rocher chocolates in the other, bent down to her to offer his cheeks for the kisses. I didn't warrant so much as a glance from my mother. Everything revolved around Stefan.

My father was similarly dressed to the nines. He wore dark purple trousers, a vest, and a pink-colored shirt, which he had combined with a pink and gray striped tie. He was freshly shaven, his moustache perfectly cut, and he had even tamed his bushy eyebrows. His night-black hair was combed back with Brisk hair crème, and I smelled the Irish Moos aftershave that he's used since he came to Germany.

He sat, as always, on the sofa, absorbed in his Islamic tear-away calendar. Not far from him sat Ablam, Elif, Mehmet, and Mustafa. When my father caught sight of Stefan, he stood up, also cried "Ooğluuum," and embraced him heartily. All the while his white teeth sparkled in his shining face. He too ignored me completely. "You sit," he said to Stefan and simultaneously shooed Mustafa away with a gesture of his hand so that the guest received the place of honor in the middle of the sofa. My blond boyfriend sat down amongst my many black-haired siblings. Everyone stared at Stefan as if he'd just descended into our sofa landscape in his spaceship. Then they bombarded him with questions. Mehmet was interested in his course of study, because he also wanted to study electrical engineering in the future, Ablam inquired as to whether he had any siblings, Elif wanted to know if he could come to her house at some point to fix her satellite dish, and my mother invited Stefan's parents over for the very next weekend. Only my father said nothing, but looked contentedly at me.

We sat together for a long time on this fall day, laughing, talking, and eating. Apparently my mother had taken my request seriously and spoken to my father about us wanting to wait to get married. I hadn't had any hope that my father would permit this, but it was worth a try. And see, my mother came through. I don't know how she managed it, but

in the end my father was of the opinion that Stefan should first finish his studies before he would be allowed to marry me.

Despite this glowing beginning, our relationship fell to pieces two years later. We had both worked a lot, perhaps too much, and concentrated solely on our schooling, and when we saw each other in the evenings, we were so tired that we hardly spoke to one another. Then Stefan went to the USA for a year to do a practicum, and when he came back after a year, we had grown apart. For both of us, all pragmatism aside, the separation was a tragedy, but it proceeded in an orderly German way: without injured honor, without murders, without deaths.

For many years my family hoped that we would find each other again, once we'd found our places in life. Secretly I hoped for that too. Until that summer day last year when I found a card in my mail box, on which was written: "We're getting married." Stefan had found another bride.

13. Your German is Very Good

My mother has no use for the topic of discrimination. And why should she, she can't even pronounce the word properly. She doesn't feel discriminated against when a saleslady shouts in her ear: "You no touchy," because she's reached into the window display to test the quality of material of a blouse. My mother doesn't react at all, and then just says: "No good quality."

I, by contrast, feel very much discriminated against and react with supreme Germanness at such moments. I ask the saleslady if she could please formulate the sentence once more using the correct grammar, make her aware that her behavior is xenophobic, and request that she apologize to my mother.

My conduct is very embarrassing for my mother. She looks at the saleslady apologetically, takes my arm, and pulls me along. This makes me even more furious, such that I turn around and call back to the saleslady: "If you'd completed your high-school diploma, you wouldn't have to be standing here now." Then my mother says: "Now you've sunk to her level. I thought you were smarter than that."

At the same time, I myself didn't notice that I was being discriminated against until I was in my mid-twenties. Until that point I'd actually lived very well with the exoticism bonus. I once came into contact with discrimination in primary school, but I wasn't really conscious of it at the time, and I solved the problem in my own way. It happened in gym class, when our teacher announced that all the children were to join hands and form a circle.

I took hold of Manuela Krämer's hand, who was standing next to me, but she pulled it away. The teacher ordered Manuela to take my hand, to which she answered: "My mom said that Turks stink."

The teacher was furious, grabbed Manuela's left hand and my right hand, and drove them together. At the end of the game, Manuela let go of my hand, brought hers theatrically to her nose, sniffed it, and made a face. That's where the fun stopped for me. For me, being Turkish and stinking were two very different things. After school was out, I waited in front of the door for her and gave her a sound beating.

As a teenager, my Turkish heritage was only advantageous for me. In my early twenties, I got by every doorman in every club in the Ruhr Valley because I wore the shortest skirts; all the boys fell in love with me because I was the girl with the liquid-black eyes and the silky hair; I could justify my completely unnecessary fits of rage with my southern temperament, and I was always allowed to take more liberties than my German girlfriends. For example, because my boyfriend at the time flirted with another girl, I simply put his suitcase outside the door. He thought that was great and bragged at every party about how passionate and hot-blooded his girlfriend was. Then we were even: he had won the envy of his friends, and I had a legitimate reason to toss him back out on the street at a moment's notice.

During my time as a student, I always had the best part-time jobs because, for personnel managers, I was quite the phenomenon – a Turkish woman who spoke perfect German and who combined tight skirts with high-heeled shoes. I have never understood what was so phenomenal about it, but then I also never asked. Financially, life as a phenomenon was very good.

Even then I often heard the sentence: "Your German is very good." The first time I thanked the person for the compliment, but, as the instances accumulated, the sentence gradually got on my nerves. What is really so remarkable about a young woman who has lived in Germany for over thirty years being able to use the dative and genitive cases correctly, and to place the proper article in front of a noun? "Thanks, you do too!" was one of my preferred defense mechanisms. Or if I was in a bad mood, I said cynically: "It's crazy what all the German educational system can produce."

On the other hand, my parents have lived in Germany for just as long as I have, and they hardly speak any German. When I ask my mother why she never learned German, she furrows her brow and says crossly: "I raised six children. Did you starve or die of thirst? Did you freeze or suffer?" I don't have an answer to that. Or she rails vociferously: "Your father has paid taxes for over thirty years without speaking a word of German, and now my children are already paying taxes."

With my siblings I speak a mixture of both languages. We not only can change from one language to the other in seconds, but also fit a myriad of German words into sentences in our native language, adjusting them to fit Turkish grammar and sentence structure, and in doing so create our own language: "I still have to cook akşam yemeği," Ablam says before dinner, or I ask: "Arabanın keylini give yaparmısın" (can you please give me the car key?). My mother strictly rejects such linguistic creations. She insists that only Turkish be spoken in her house. When I try to explain to her that it's difficult for my tongue to abandon German completely, she hisses at me: "The tongue has no bones. It always has command of its mother language."

Some praise my German, others ask me sympathetically if I've ever personally experienced hostility towards foreigners. For a long time I also had a derisive answer to this question because, on the one hand, I don't feel like a foreigner in Germany and don't want to feel that way and, on the other hand, because I find the German "bleeding-heart cult" annoying. And especially so back when everyone in this country was afflicted with a feverish passion for long lines of demonstrators carrying lights. I can imagine exactly how German mothers, together with their children, climbed up to the attic, pulled out the box with the sticker "Christmas Tree Decorations," and hung strings of lights in the window to combat racism. Or they went straight out into the streets and lit candles that immediately died again because the wind blew them out. I always found these campaigns a bit silly because, until this point, I personally had only ever found advantages in being Turkish. "A woman in a miniskirt is still a woman in a miniskirt, regardless of the heritage of the behind that wears it," I explained to my friends coolly.

That changed abruptly when, in May 1993, four Germans set the house of a Turkish family in Solingen on fire and, as a result, five Turks lost their lives. Ablam called me at my apartment in Duisburg the following morning. "Turn the T.V. on right now," she whispered into the phone, stunned. Shocked, I stared over and over again at the pictures drifting by me in slow-motion. Clouds of smoke, the burnt house, shrouded corpses, crying men and women. The victims had names that were familiar to me: Hülya, Gürsün, Saime, Gülüstan. One woman even had the same name as me: Hatice. Mevlüde Genç, the mother, aunt, and grandmother of the victims, who had herself survived the attack, reminded me very much of my own mother. At this moment it became clear to me that it could just as well have been

my family, that the dead could have been my siblings. Solingen is just sixty kilometers away from Duisburg.

I didn't know the family, but the sorrow over their fate paralyzed me to the point that I crouched in front of the television and cried. Then I spontaneously grabbed my bag and drove to Solingen. I sank to my knees in front of the sea of flowers and opened my arms to pray. After almost five years, I prayed again for the first time. I said the Sura that my father had taught us from the Koran. I'd thought that I'd forgotten them long ago.

When I got home it was already dark. I dug out an old white bed sheet, took a thick paint brush, and wrote on it in red "Mourning the victims in Solingen." The Os ran a bit; they looked like tears trickling out of large round eyes. I opened my window and clamped the sheet between the frames. Although I felt myself personally touched, shame rose in me, this strange German feeling that overcomes me whenever I publicly take a stand for something. It's difficult to describe. You know that it's right to protest, but it comes across as excessive anyway.

After the attack thousands of people formed new lines of lights, gleaming in the darkness all over Germany. I didn't find it silly anymore. I had to accept that there is racism and xenophobia in Germany, that many foreigners – even when they've lived here for a long time or, like many Turkish migrant workers, were once even expressly invited to Germany – are rejected and discriminated against. I had to come to terms with the fact that my family and, yes, even I personally could at any time become victims of racist assaults in Germany.

I try to deal with it objectively, try not to become bitter or to develop any sort of aggression against my German countrymen, whom I have, after all, chosen myself. I do know that most of them don't have anything against foreigners. It's important to me to point

out in all my journalistic contributions that prejudices are fundamentally senseless, that every person is an individual, and that we must get to know one another in order to understand each other better. And it's just as important to me to adhere to the fact that there are many people of Turkish descent who want to live in Germany, now and in the future – and not only because it's better for them economically, or because they can earn more money here than in the Anatolian villages their parents left thirty or forty years ago, but rather because they feel at home here, because Germany is their home.

14. German Ayşe – German Eiche[36]

Doubtless I have Turkish or, in the broader sense, southern characteristics. Even if it's not the way I park my car that men first notice about me. I also can't very well entice with fiery menus and aphrodisiac desserts. I very seldom cook. No, it's much simpler than that: as soon as I step into a bar, men's gazes are riveted unerringly on my breasts. This is owing to the fact that I don't hide my curves, but rather present them up-front. In bars in Berlin, with a low-cut top, I stand out immediately, while I wouldn't turn a single head in the clubs in Istanbul – for Turkish, big-city standards my manner of dress is not nearly revealing enough.

When I bought myself a Wonderbra, my friend Julia explained to me that this particular bra was developed for women who have a naturally smaller bust size. I however, with my Anatolian bosom, would thoroughly violate it. When I wore it for the first time, she refused to go out with me. She said that I was a public nuisance, to which I countered: "I have the best friend in the world. The only bosom friend with two backs." Of course it wasn't meant to be nasty. Julia is content with her cute little bosom.

I don't complain about the attention of men, on the contrary, I feel flattered when they gaze after me. For me glances from men are compliments. And in these situations I like best to say: "Boys, don't just stare, buy a round of beer."

When I saw my last boyfriend for the first time, my knees went weak before I'd exchanged so much as a word with him. It very seldom happens to me that a man can drive

me crazy at first sight. But this time I was prepared for it; on the weekend, Ablam had dreamt she saw me arm in arm with a blond man. One must take such dreams seriously. Or at least one can't get around listening to them. Sometimes I sit by the telephone on a daily basis and listen to my family's auspicious prophecies, and, if things transpired accordingly, by this point I would have more husbands than I knew what to do with.

At any rate, at one of the SPD's media events, to which I actually hadn't wanted to go, I saw a tall blond man, and abruptly thought of Ablam's dream. Not that I would have expected to find the man of my dreams in the SPD. But in such situations I put my trust in fate, or "kısmet," as Ablam would say. Just because it was so unlikely for me to stumble into the arms of my beloved at this event, I knew immediately that fate had struck.

As I stood there sipping my prosecco, our gazes suddenly met, and I was suddenly conscious of the fact that I was wearing old jeans, no make-up, and my hair was knotted into a sloppy bun because I'd had no desire to wash it. At least I was wearing high heels. The blond reminded me of a young Willy Brandt, only he was much blonder. Julia delivered the sobering assessment: "He looks like Angela Merkel, just a bit more feminine."

We weren't introduced to each other until hours later, and when we finally started conversing, my finer motor skills left me in the lurch, and I began to talk nonsense. To rescue the situation, I kissed him stealthily in the cloakroom. The next morning I asked: "And, are you coming back?" He answered: "Yes," and we were a couple. I like clear announcements.

The whole thing had only one catch, and so, unfortunately, I had to let him go after a while. And it was that he told everyone very proudly that he was together with a Turkish

woman. But when his colleagues at work replied in surprise: "With a Turkish woman?" then he hurried to slip in the fact that I was actually German, I'd grown up here and was totally different from the other Turks. It always sounded like my being Turkish was a flaw for which he had to excuse himself. For him it was indisputable that Turkish women wear head scarves, because the sister of his only Turkish classmate in high school had worn a head scarf. Turkish women don't have sex because according to Islamic beliefs they must be virgins when they marry, they have brothers who avenge the tarnished honor of the family, and they must speak poor German, only because he himself has problems communicating with his Turkish vegetable vendor.

I was sorry to dump him because, aside from his hang-ups, he was really nice, and he could make me laugh. However, it just wasn't working out. The mental drawers and compartments in his head made it impossible for him to have a nonprejudiced view of me, and thus the clichés blocked out the reality. Whenever I wanted to make it clear to him that there are vastly different lifestyles among Turkish people – just as there are among Germans – he would answer stubbornly: "But you're completely different from the other Turks."

His mother presented a further problem. She never got tired of insisting every time I visited that I wasn't Turkish at all, but rather German. In a certain way she reminded me of my father, for whom I shall always remain his *Turkish* daughter, even though I feel myself to be thoroughly German. It didn't do any good to mention to her that one doesn't become German overnight, just because one had been handed a German passport – a little, wine-red book with golden writing on it. But she wouldn't let up, and she introduced me at all the family celebrations with the words: "This is Hatice, but she's German."

To avoid further questions about my heritage, I consistently answered: "I'm Hatice, Turkish with a German passport." Incidentally, I say that all the time when I'm asked about my country of origin. It's immediately clear to everyone: I'm Turkish, but successfully integrated.

Perhaps I shouldn't have dismissed the young Willy Brandt and his clan so quickly. But then, at any rate, I plunged into a profound crisis on my thirtieth birthday. Because on this day I received eye cream from my girlfriend Julia, who looked me meaningfully in the face. The first eye cream in my life! I smiled tiredly. "Oh, thank you, how nice of you," I said and thought: "Now the chances of marrying a German man of my own age are definitively nil." The men I found attractive suddenly had girlfriends in their mid-twenties. And men who found me interesting were all of a sudden significantly older then I am, some over forty or fifty.

Defiantly, I resolved that I'd now go to lunch every day at the Berlin university cafeteria just around the corner from my house. It promptly rained attention and nice compliments again. My mood spontaneously improved, and the crisis was quickly overcome. True, the average age of my admirers was about twenty-two, but they held the door for me, carried my tray, or bought me a cola, and more than one fell head over heels in love with me. I asked myself why I hadn't thought of this much earlier, because in a very short time, my line of admirers grew just about as quickly as the line-up for food. Julia of all people reproached me: I would completely ruin these poor greenhorns for the coming generation of women. It would be my fault if these young men were forever romantically disabled.

I couldn't believe that my German friend actually came to me with these criticisms, particularly when she herself had no objections to men taking significantly younger lovers in order to overcome their midlife crises. What is so objectionable about a woman having a younger lover? Anyway, young men today are more worldly than one might think. And in bed, as an experienced woman, it's almost impossible to teach them anything new. They don't know what they're doing, but at least they do it all night long.

The only person who understood me was my Turkish girlfriend Gül, also unmarried, because she's thirty and, since I've known her, constantly seeking out younger boyfriends, or – for a while now – preferably girlfriends. I met her a couple of years ago in a club in Berlin that throws a very special party on the last Saturday of every month. The evening is called "Gayhane," derived from the Turkish term "meyhane" (tavern or bar), and thus means something along the lines of "gay bar." And because the atmosphere is so good, heterosexuals come ever more frequently to party there as well. In the meantime, Gül lives together with her life partner, and when she introduced her to her parents, they were very proud and told the relatives and neighbors: "Look, our daughter is respectable. She works, doesn't constantly associate with different men, and lives with her best girlfriend."

"Don't worry," Gül said, with regards to my crisis with similarly-aged men. "You will always remain an erotic paradise for German men." I found it to be a very nice compliment, just unfortunately, from my perspective, coming from the wrong gender.

The fact that I'm Turkish wouldn't be nearly so striking if I didn't have a foreign-sounding name. One of my bosses once said that my name, when printed, looked like the copy editor had been typing drunk. How else could one explain the combination of letters

in my name? I've already had editors simply leave the "y" out of my last name because they think that I must have made an error in the spelling. That's actually pretty thick and attests to a tremendous presumptuousness, but I'm sure that it's ignorance, not arrogance.

It hasn't been possible to infer anything about my heritage from my accent-free German for a long time now. Sometimes I go for months without ever once feeling Turkish. Only when I meet new people who ask me where I'm from do they pull me out of my German world. "From Berlin," I answer. "No, originally?" "From Duisburg." And then the question always comes: "No, I mean, where are your roots?" This moment then provides me once more with occasion to reflect on my heritage. I ask myself suddenly, what's Turkish about me, and what's German? And how does everything actually fit together?

I am, says Julia, a woman wandering between two worlds. That sounds horrid to me, and I answer: "I'm actually far too lazy to walk. I'd rather sit, and why not on two chairs at the same time?"

If I were to describe my situation with an image, then I'd say I'm a tumblewheat.[37] Tumblewheats are the straw formations that you sometimes see flying around in Western movies. They're torn from their roots by the desert wind, and they roll and jump until they strike roots somewhere else because of a rain shower. Then they bloom for a short time, dry out, and continue to fly aimlessly through the desert.

Julia often advises me that I should apply myself to the search for my identity. But honestly, I neither feel as though I'm in a dilemma, nor do I want to change anything. I regard my life as being extremely rich, because I actually have two, depending on whether I'm staying with my Turkish family or in Berlin.

It's a similar case with the exasperating debate on head scarves. My German friends ask me what I think about head scarves, and how far, in my opinion, the right to freedom of religion anchored in our constitutional law should be allowed to go? My Muslim friends ask me how it's possible that the wearing of a cross should be permissible, while the wearing of a head scarf is forbidden. I understand both positions very well, and therefore can't definitively align myself with one side or the other. I can decide only for myself personally, and I've decided that I don't want to wear a scarf.

My mother wears it because, after sixty years of having it on her head, she simply can't take it off. It's a part of her life, just like the numerous meals she cooks to make herself happy. Ablam wears it because she's a Muslim who practices her beliefs. I'm a Turkish woman who used to wear a head scarf and who abandoned it because she didn't feel comfortable in it anymore. The head scarf also has a religious reason behind it. In the Koran, Sura 33, Verse 59, it reads:

Oh Prophet, say to your wives, and your daughters, and the wives of believers, that they cover themselves with their overgarments. This is more proper; they will sooner be recognized as Muslims, and thus they will not be molested.

But even after I'd read the Sura, I wanted to continue on without a head scarf. I didn't accept that women should enshroud themselves and conceal their beauty in order to assume responsibility for men who couldn't bridle their fantasies.

Doubtless there are Muslim women and girls who are forced to wear a head scarf. But there are even more women like Ablam, for whom the head scarf is a symbol of their religious affiliation, worn with pride and of their own free will. Not even within my family

can we reach a prevailing agreement on how a woman should present herself in public. How should the entire Islamic world agree on it?

Ablam wears a head scarf, but respects the fact that I don't. Conversely, I don't think that she's backward or unfashionable and certainly not that she's oppressed. The head scarf hasn't divided us. We discuss religion and beliefs without passing judgment on one other.

Ablam has two daughters, who are growing up without head scarves, who listen to Britney Spears, and who eat at McDonald's. Posters of Leonardo DiCaprio and the Turkish singer Tarkan hang in their rooms. Once a week they go to the mosque to learn the Koran – wearing head scarves. Ablam doesn't force them to do this. They do it voluntarily, and if they, at some point, decide against wearing head scarves, she would respect this. Her daughters, my nieces, also know different parallel worlds, but they dance undisturbed back and forth between them.

I feel at home in both worlds, the German and the Turkish, in neither the one nor the other am I a simply a guest, and I draw to the fullest extent from two rich cultures. I am Hatice, with all the experiences, memories, and desires of both worlds, and I treasure the differences between German and Turkish.

My parents had only *one* identity, knew only one world, when they came to Germany. They knew exactly where they belonged – in Turkey. They had one home, which they wanted to leave only temporarily, in order to work and earn money. They spoke one language, their mother tongue, Turkish, which, even after many years abroad, they've enriched with only the most necessary shreds of German so they can make themselves understood to some extent. And they had only one intention: they wanted to make a better

life possible for their children. They oscillated between two countries, but not between two worlds, because, after a couple of years, they wanted to return home to the country in which they were born and grew up. After all, they were migrant workers in Germany.

I don't mean that reproachfully, quite the opposite in fact. My parents really did want to return to Turkey, but with their children. My father said: "As soon as the first child reaches school age, we'll go back." Ablam was enrolled in school. "As soon as the second child reaches school age, we'll go back." I was enrolled in school. My four siblings followed, but my parents didn't go back.

The two of them stand, so to speak, for the abortive Multiculti Generation. The notion of a cosmopolitan and multicultural society was just a vision, a dream of the Germans. My parents never wanted that, they never intended to stay in Germany for very long. The Germans were hoping for a peaceful cooperation of different nationalities, skin colors, and religions; they wanted to prove that, in their country, the times of racism and discrimination were gone forever, but the first generation Turkish migrants didn't play along. They wanted to return to their homeland as quickly as possible.

Both sides noticed too late that their ideas were unrealistic. The one side was afraid of saying out loud that the migrant workers should learn German and become integrated, and the other resisted abandoning their identity and sealed themselves off behind their traditions.

My parents would have had enough money years ago to have been able to afford a better life in Turkey. But even after their last and youngest child had finished his schooling and left home, they never found a date to pack up the whole kit and caboodle and leave the

country. Now it's too late to cash in the return ticket, because my siblings and I already have our own lives in Germany and would never return to Turkey together with them.

In the meantime, my parents have found a compromise: they spend six months of the year in Germany and six months in their vacation home on the Aegean Sea in Turkey, but nevertheless feel themselves to be Turkish. As Turkish as one can possibly feel among health insurance smart cards, properly functioning central heating, and Mercedes Benz cars.

I, by contrast, am Turkish, but also German, a foreigner, Muslim, a German-Turk, a journalist, or a bitch, depending on who happens to be scrutinizing me. And I experience it as richness to unite these contradictions within myself. I don't wear a head scarf, am still not married at thirty-five, I drink alcohol, and I can attest to the fact that there are indeed Turkish women who have sex before they marry. I'm too German to be Turkish, and too Turkish to call myself German. My father doesn't like to hear that at all. He says that I don't have to say much about it. For him it's enough for me to be Turkish at heart.

"Do you feel German or Turkish?" I'm often asked. I can't give a definite answer to this question because I always strike my roots wherever it is that I'm happy to be. Until a couple of years ago, those roots were in Duisburg, then in Berlin. At one point I flourished for a short time in New York, the next year in a Turkish hotel where I worked to improve my Turkish. A Hans was once my root, and perhaps I'll anchor myself in another Hans soon, depending on where the desert wind blows me next.

For me the question of identity doesn't have anything to do with a particular place, but rather with a life situation. And this can be a city, a country, a person, or a job. I know both mentalities, having grown up in Germany with Turkish influences. I express myself in

the German language, think and dream in German. But I rave unswervingly to my friends about Turkey, and try to entice them with Anatolian charms. In Turkey, on the other hand, I'm the "woman from Germany," which means that the Turks want me to tell them how Hans and Helga live in Germany.

"Your heritage arouses interest," a man said to me once. "I hate tardiness," I countered, because he arrived twenty minutes late for the date. It's great that my name and appearance are interesting, because these are usually the only things by which one can determine my heritage at first glance. He looked at me, surprised, and said: "Why? You're a southerner. That isn't supposed to bother you."

I hear that a lot, especially in the summer when I groan about the heat. "But you're a southerner. It can't get hot enough for you." But I have to disappoint my friends in Germany and show them my sunburn. Even if I have Anatolian hips, dark hair, and a sharp tongue, in this regard I'm very northern.

Once I was standing with my sister Fatma at a bus stop in Turkey. It was sweltering hot, the sun burnt, and there were no busses as far as the eye could see. I looked hectically at the schedule, and got angry when I didn't find anything. When the bus came, my sister said: "Come on, Helga." Even today she laughs resoundingly when she thinks of this day. Busses in Turkey are like rainy weather. One never knows exactly when they're coming, and one generally has to wait a long time for them. But no one would get upset if the sun pierced their necks while they waited.

The perception of time in Turkey is another topic altogether. Time is always there, so why rush yourself? I don't want to think about how many times I've stood in vain at a

Turkish friend's door because they'd simply forgotten that we'd arranged to meet. My brother Mustafa often greets me with the sentence: "If you don't come today, you'll come tomorrow," when I've once more had to wait an eternity somewhere in Dusiburg because my family can't hold to an agreed-upon time. I say nothing and think my piece to myself.

Most of the time I hold my tongue before I give someone my opinion. And then some time, when no one expects it, the storm hits. In this respect, I'm almost like my German friends. For them, rage and pride take place only on the sidelines – sitting around the table with friends, or on the football field. The Germans play defensive football, and they debate in exactly the same way. "That's the difference between us," says my sister Fatma: "Turks explode, Germans implode." The fact that I often think to myself, "You can be right and I'll have my peace and quiet," is something I'd be better off keeping from her.

When I was in my early twenties, my friends said that I had an attractive charisma. I didn't know what they meant by that, and looked for it in the mirror. To this day I haven't found it, but at least I know what I can achieve with it, and I always bring it into play when I need it. This is very Turkish: chest out, stomach in, squeeze your butt together, and offer up an appearance of self-confidence.

Of course there are many situations in which I'm unsure, but no one would ever see it. In total contrast to the Germans. They even point out their weaknesses. Or how to explain the fact that German women stand in front of the mirror and say: "My behind is too fat, my breasts are too small, and my hair is too thin." Naturally, a Turkish woman also has doubts about herself, and her flaws are enumerated often enough, even by her own sister, but she stays cool regardless, adjusts her bosom with two hands, and hisses: "Pah, it's all good."

Lately my German friends use the word "fear" far too often. They are anxious about unemployment, about the future, about loneliness, about failure, and lately, about terrorist attacks. Their biggest fear, however, is talking about their emotions. If they so much as hear the word, they get anxious.

"No wonder that German men run away from you – the emotional fireworks you shoot at them scares them," my friend Sascha said to me once. He's of the opinion that I'm going about it all wrong. With a German man, he would advise me, I must exercise elegant reservation, act a bit arrogant, and never talk about emotions too soon. Otherwise German men could feel overburdened. I don't understand this. Why are what I'd consider to be the best qualities of a woman – indeed, open-heartedness, passion, and eroticism – forbidden, if I want to appeal to a German man?

I deal with emotions in a very Turkish manner; I display my joy and sadness all day long and everywhere I go. The most beautiful thing about Turks is that they don't conceal their passions. They are impulsive and affectionate, and they talk about their feelings without deliberating first.

My father lived spontaneously too, when he followed his gut over thirty years ago and decided to move to Germany. I would be living a different life today if he'd just decided with his head, and hadn't left his village. I would have long since been married, had multiple children, and would most probably be illiterate. My father is a man of feeling. Although he can hardly read and write, he's a clever man who combines wisdom and gut-feeling. Life has taught him what's good. At the same time, it doesn't matter to him which cultural circle he's in when he makes his decisions.

But I don't have to look back to our village to recognize that I've already put light-years between myself and all things Turkish. My path was less typical than those of my siblings. I was eighteen and had no desire to get married in the foreseeable future. I still wanted to look around and see what life had in store for me. But my parents were not to be argued out of the opinion that I should get married soon and find a husband who could take care of me. I struggled against the life that my parents had planned for me according to their Turkish traditions, and I moved out.

Of course, my parents were not pleased that their daughter was moving out to live on her own. They tried to persuade me to start a family or at least to return to them. But for me, my moving out was a rebellion against the Turkish tradition of marriage and a quiet fight that I fought in front of the wardrobe to continue to be able to wear tight jeans. I didn't move out to provoke my parents. I just wanted to live my teenage dreams, go to the movies with boys, eat ice cream, kiss, and later, when I'd tried everything, maybe get married.

Today my father says about my life: "Every rooster crows on his own dunghill." He doesn't comment anymore, but rather shakes his head when I tell him about my independent, self-determined life, where I earn my own money. He doesn't understand it, but he's accepted my life the way it is. And when once again he conveys to me in the father tongue that I have now finally passed the point of marriage, he always adds: "An old wolf becomes an object of mockery for dogs."

I know that he privately worries about me and hopes that my siblings will take care of me when he's no longer around. For my nieces and nephews I'm already the crazy aunt who will never marry and will, at some point, when she's old, live with them. I turn the

image of a traditional Turkish woman upside down. I'm a single woman, a big-city girl who sometimes disguises herself as a Turkish woman when she visits her Anatolian village wearing a head scarf.

It took a very long time before my father gave up wanting to marry me off. When he got to that point, I had to accept that, at thirty-five, I'd gone from being a woman back to being a daughter. But I don't mind at all that I'm his daughter again, for my part, also his Turkish daughter, for exactly as long as I visit him. Because I know that I'll soon drive back to my other world with colors flying. And when my German friends ask me if I'd ever like to live in Turkey again, I answer: "No, you?"

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My particular thanks, however, goes to Brigitte Kruse. Everything would be different without her.

Endnotes

1 Until recently, German citizenship laws were based on parentage (*Blutsrecht* in German), allowing only those who could prove German heritage the opportunity to become German citizens and forbidding dual citizenship. With increasing immigration to Germany, these laws began to be viewed as discriminatory and were finally changed after Gerhard Schröder and his coalition government came to power in 1998. Currently, in order to become a German citizen, a person must have legally resided in Germany for eight years. This term may be shortened to six years for individuals who are particularly well qualified for integration, for example, those who exhibit higher than average German language skills. Foreigners married to German citizens may apply for citizenship after three years. It is now also possible for foreigners to become German citizens without giving up citizenship in their native countries. Everyone wishing to become a citizen must attain a certain level of proficiency in the German language, demonstrate that they have no criminal record, be able to prove their ability to support themselves financially, and pass an "Einbürgerungstest" – an exam that tests knowledge of Germany and German culture.

2 The Ruhr Valley is a region in western Germany known for its heavy industrialization. It is often referred to as "Ruhrpott," the Ruhr "pit" or "hole," because of the abundance of industry.

3 "Gastarbeiter" is the common German term for immigrant workers seeking employment in Germany. The term is euphemistic, describing the workers as "guests."

4 "Aldi" is a German supermarket known for reasonable prices. Another such chain of stores is "Real."

5 "Tisch," "Speisen," and "Freude" are the German words for "table," "food," and "joy."

6 In Germany, social support is facetiously referred to as the "social hammock."

7 "The drink "prosecco" is a sparkling white Italian wine, made from the "prosecco" grape.

8 "Kreuzberg" is an area of Berlin with a particularly high Turkish population.

9 A "Döner" would be referred to as "donair" in North America.

10 In 1529, the Ottoman Empire, under the leadership of Sultan Suleiman I, besieged the city of Vienna.

11 The "CDU" is a political party, the "Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands" or the Christian Democratic Union of Germany.

12 In the original, the author uses the word "Fleischeslust" – literally "carnal lust" or "fleshly lust." It is interesting that she describes her Muslim father's passion for barbecuing and meat with a term so prominent in both Christian and Muslim religious contexts – a subtle play perhaps on her involvement in two cultures.

13 ADAC stands for "Allgemeiner Deutscher Automobil-Club." Among other services, ADAC provides roadside assistance to members.

14 A "Sura" is a chapter in the Koran.

15 Guenther Wallraff is a German writer and investigative journalist who would disguise himself, assuming ficitonal personae in order to experience or interact with the subjects he was investigating. The books resulting from his research denounce social injustice. His 1985 book *Ganz Unten* describes his experiences and he various mistreatments he suffered while posingg as a Turkish migrant worker.

16 "Pommes rot-weiß" (French fries red-and-white) is the phrase for French fries with ketchup and mayonnaise.

17 The author's idealized description of the industrial landscape recalls the imagery of Expressionist poems, for example Enrst Stadler's "Fahrt über die Kölische Rheinbrücke."

18 "Ruhrkohle" is the name of a large coal mining company in Germany.

19 The term "hoca" is the Turkish word for "teacher."

20 On May 29, 1993, five Turkish women died when their house in Solingen was set on fire by four young men. The attack was motivated by racism and xenophobia.

21 These are common German pet names – "Hase," "Maus," or "Bärchen."

22 "Techtelmechtel" is the German word for "hanky-panky."

23 Going to the sauna is a very popular activity in Germany, and the saunas themselves are much larger and more elaborate than one typically finds in North America. The word "Aufguss" in German – which the author uses in the original text – refers to the pouring of scented water onto the hot stones in a sauna room to produce an aromatic steam. In German saunas, this occurs once every hour and the time and scent are posted on the door.

24 Theo Waigel was German Finance Minister from 1989–1998.

25 Roberto Blanco is a black actor and entertainer in Germany.

26 SPD stands for *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, the Social Democratic Party of Germany.

27 MSV Duisburg is a German football club.

28 It is considered to be good luck if the couple can get through the log without having to stop. This tradition symbolizes the fact that, although marriage brings a couple joy and happiness, it also requires them to work together to maintain the relationship.

29 Media Markt is a popular and very large chain of electronics stores in Germany.

30 Bayern München is a professional football team located in Munich.

31 FDP stands for *Freie Demokratische Partei*, the Free Democratic Party.

32 The terms "Kanakendeutsch" and "Kanaksprak" began as derogatory designations for the sociolect spoken by Turkish immigrants in Germany. Over time, however, it has lost some of its negative connotation and is used by both Turks and Germans to describe this particular

use of language. Similarly, the sociolect itself, and manifold variations of it, have become increasingly popular with young people and increasingly interesting for academic investigation.

33 Fasching refers to the German celebration of Carnival.

34 Edeka is a German grocery store chain.

35 "Mensch ärgere dich nicht" is a board game commonly known in English as "Parcheesi" or "Sorry!"

36 "Eiche" means oak in German, and would be pronounced almost exactly like the Turkish name "Ayşe." Also, it is a long-standing symbol of stalwart German nobility and loyalty.

37 In the original text, the author uses "tumblewheat" instead of "tumbleweed" or the German "Steppenläufer."